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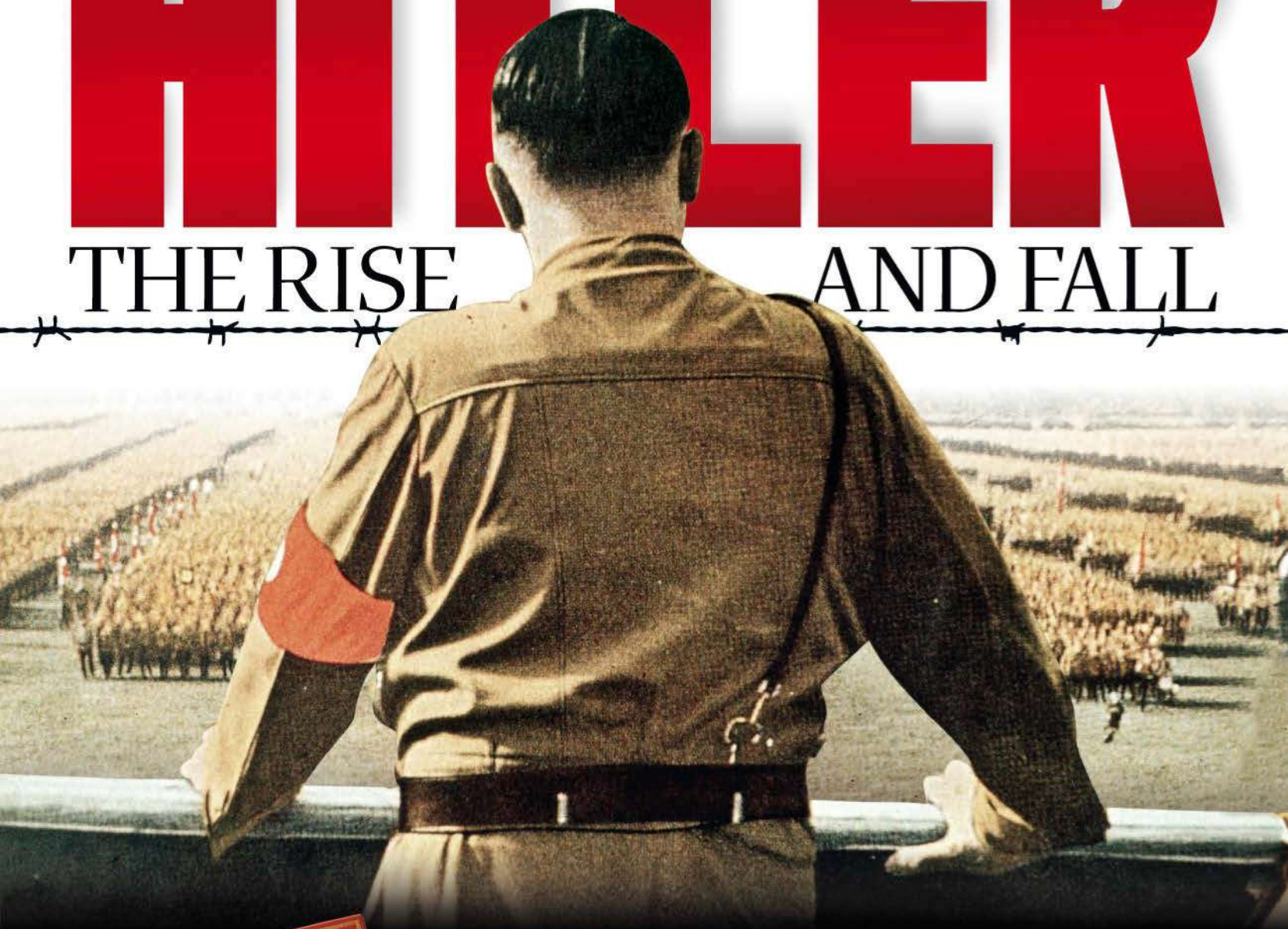
Bringing  
History to Life

COLLECTOR'S EDITION

# HITLER

## THE RISE

## AND FALL



### NAZI BIBLE

Hitler spent nine months in prison drafting his blueprint for a future Nazi empire



### THREATS

Dumb luck saved Führer from no fewer than 42 assassination attempts



### SUICIDE

Dictator took his own life as Red Army guns pounded Berlin

£12.99







# Get close to Hitler

Through seductive speeches and visions of Germany as a mighty world power, Hitler was able to rally millions to his cause. What human being, though, could attract such support? When asked to describe the man Adolf Hitler, acquaintances and party colleagues frequently used the words 'charm' and 'charisma'. But this charm proved superficial as

Hitler ruthlessly crushed anyone who stood in Nazism's way, cynically ordering the slaughter of millions during World War II. In this special issue we examine Hitler up close as a human being: his ambitions, daily habits, family life, pets, and private rooms – from his luxury villa at Berghof in the fresh alpine air to the claustrophobic Führerbunker beneath the streets of Berlin.

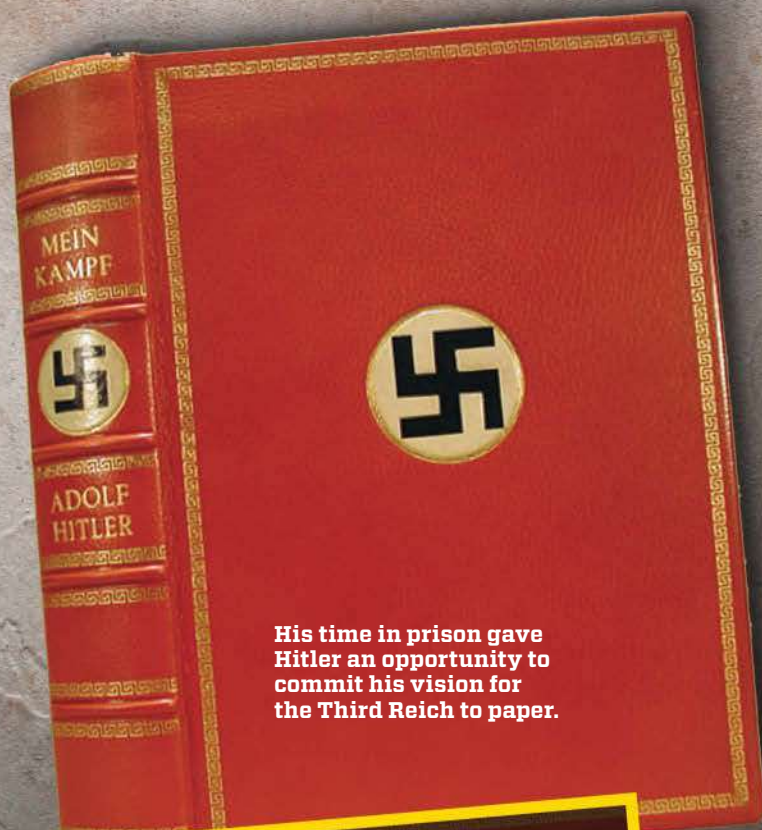
Enjoy the issue!



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Guards protected Hitler from those who wanted to touch the Führer.



His time in prison gave Hitler an opportunity to commit his vision for the Third Reich to paper.

## RISE TO POWER

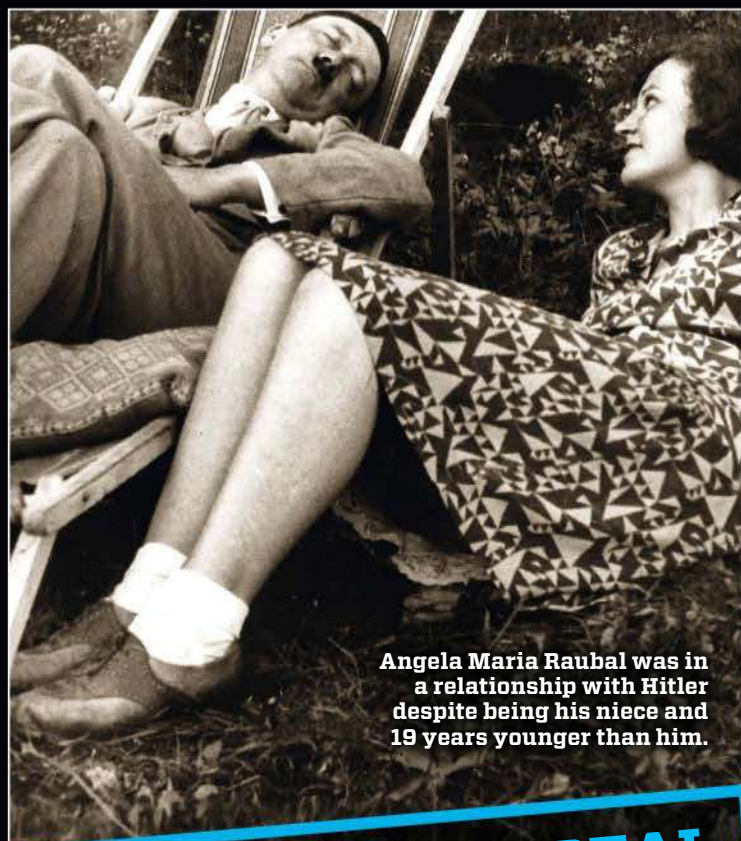
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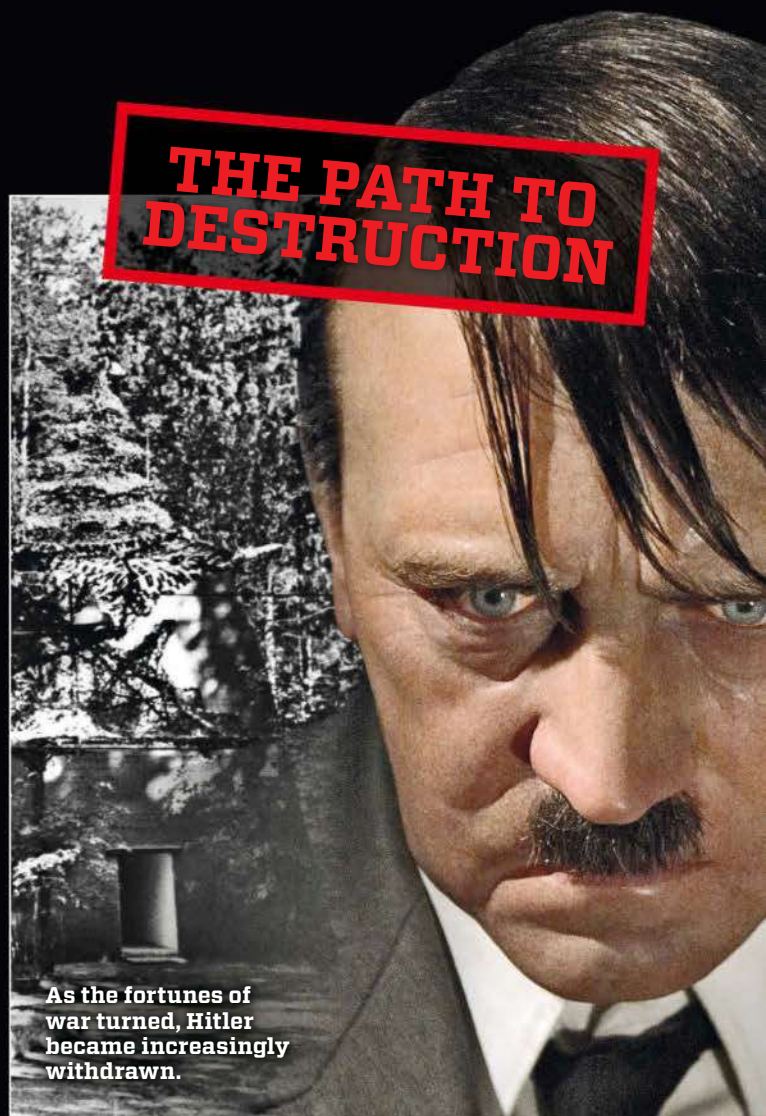


Angela Maria Raubal was in a relationship with Hitler despite being his niece and 19 years younger than him.

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**RISE TO POWER**

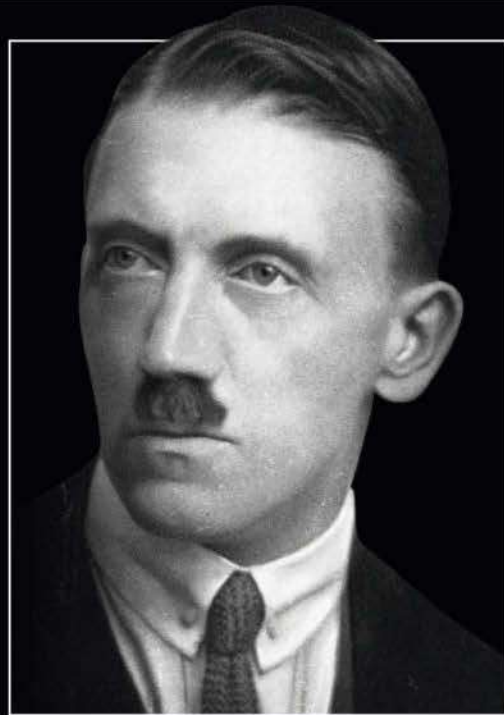
# ELECTED DICTATOR

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The pale Austrian soldier was persuasive. With Italy's fascist leader Mussolini as his role model, Hitler and his Brownshirts first tried to seize power in Germany by force. They failed, but subsequent elections saw the Nazi party steadily grow, until in 1933 a powerless President Hindenburg swore in the popular Nazi leader as the country's chancellor.

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# THE NAZI PARTY COMES OF AGE

In 1918, a Bavarian locksmith founds the German Workers' Party. In September the following year, the party gains a new member – a pale, Austrian soldier with a rare gift for speaking. Adolf Hitler becomes the 55th member of the insignificant party. Over the next four years, he takes control, renames it the Nazi Party, and builds an army of brutal young thugs to crush opponents. After gaining a reputation locally for being an angry but gifted orator, Hitler decides to instigate a Nazi revolution in Germany. His putsch fails.









## 1918-24

**1918** Defeat in World War I leads to Kaiser Wilhelm's abdication.

**1919** Adolf Hitler joins the German Workers' Party.

**1919** The German SDP declares Germany a republic.

**1923** French troops occupy the Ruhr district. The economy is collapsing.

**1923** Hitler attempts to seize power in a coup.



Adolf Hitler's name appears on the 16th November 1919 list of attendees at a meeting of the German Workers' Party.

In the early autumn of 1919, 36-year-old Captain Karl Mayr made a decision that would lead to a second world war. The army intelligence officer decided to send one of his undercover agents to a political meeting in Munich. He picked 30-year-old Corporal Adolf Hitler, a recent recruit, to draw up a report on the newly formed German Workers' Party. Mayr wanted to know whether the party's members were violent socialists who wanted to overthrow Germany's fledgling democracy.

The captain had genuine cause for concern, because since World War I, workers, sailors and communists had attempted in turn to impose a dictatorship on the former Reich. In fact, the revolutionaries had got as far as establishing Munich as a communist republic along Soviet lines before being defeated.

Around the same time, Hitler had been discharged from a military hospital after returning home from WWI blinded by mustard gas. Now he served as *Bildungsoffizier* (Instruction Officer) in the army political department's Press and News Bureau. Here, Hitler kept an eye on the large numbers of political parties, fanatical groups and paramilitary organisations being founded by returning war veterans.

**SPEECH IGNITED POLITICAL CAREER**  
On 12th September, 1919, on Mayr's orders, Hitler entered the Sterneckerbräu beer cellar in Munich. Here, 41 members

of the newly formed German Workers' Party gathered once a week to discuss the nation's future while railing against the harsh peace conditions forced on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles after WWI. Hitler listened dispassionately to a lengthy lecture on the horrendous war damages levied on Germany by France in particular. The speaker talked passionately about "interest-rate slavery" and the huge sums moneylenders were making.

Hitler had heard all this before. Instead, he watched the audience languidly, feeling increasingly bored. He'd attended dozens of similar meetings and saw the same "tiresome" organisation he'd witnessed elsewhere. The young officer decided he'd heard enough and had already donned his coat to leave when a sharp voice pierced the room. A new speaker had risen, urging for

Bavaria to secede from Germany and instead unite with Austria. His words set Adolf Hitler's political career in motion. The fierce nationalist forgot his assignment and immediately launched into a heated debate with the speaker. Gesticulating animatedly, he uttered a rapid stream of invective, talking of treason and the need for German unity. With a hoarse voice, he spoke of a Reich united by a strong German people, purged of alien races.

There was nothing new in Hitler's speech to those who listened. His opinions were shared by millions of Germans. What was new was his gift for rhetoric. The thin, pale man articulated exactly what everyone

**The Treaty of Versailles** forced Germany to give up large territories, such as North Schleswig to Denmark.



Hitler celebrates Sedantag (*Day of Sedan*) in defiance of its abolition by the Weimar Republic. The old semi-official national holiday commemorated the victory over France in 1871.

felt. His language was simple, his passion infectious. Sentences began at a low pitch and worked their way to a crescendo as they reached their climax.

The party chairman – 35-year-old locksmith Anton Drexler – immediately saw Hitler's potential to the party. He poked his neighbour: "Goodness, he's got a gob. We could use him," he said.

That evening, Hitler was enrolled in the German Workers' Party as its 55th member. On his membership card, the party secretary added 500 to his number: 555, a deliberate ploy to make the fledgling party appear larger than it actually was.

### GERMANY WAS IN DISARRAY

The German Empire in which Hitler began his political career was in a state of dissolution. Millions of disillusioned soldiers had returned from the war in 1918 filled with bitterness over Germany's defeat. Kaiser Wilhelm II – fearing a bloody revolution – abdicated and fled to Holland.

Over the following months, the country exploded in a series of violent revolutions, led by workers who wanted to create a communist Soviet republic allied with the recently established regime in Russia. Facing them was Germany's largest political group, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which was supported by the army and paramilitary *Freikorps* – Free Corps – in its battle to hold the empire together.

The fighting raged for months, and under the shadow of civil war, Germany's elected officials met in the sleepy cultural city of Weimar. Here, they drafted the Constitution of the German Reich, and ▶

### DECISIVE MOMENT

#### HITLER SENT TO MONITOR THE NAZIS

In 1919, the army ordered Hitler to infiltrate extremist parties in Munich. His duties included monitoring communist protest marches (see figure circled on the right) and attend rallies organised by groups such

as the newly founded German Workers' Party. Its nationalist rhetoric and antisemitic attitudes appealed to Hitler so much that he decided to join the party after his first meeting. Hitler's political career had begun.





# GERMANY WAS ON FIRE

*After World War I, communist rebels set Germany on fire. In 1919, civil war ravaged the country.*

The German Empire was, in 1918, a collection of small states. When Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated after World War I, revolutions broke out all over the country. While armed workers tried to establish communist republics following the Soviet example, returning war veterans fought against the rebels. The civil war raged for around six months before the army was finally able to defeat the revolutionaries.



## WILHELMSHAVEN

■ In Kiel and Wilhelmshaven, the navy revolted and, together with local workers, introduced several Soviet councils. The rebellion was the starting pistol for the socialist revolution that spread through Germany.



## HAMBURG

■ In November, 40 thousand sailors and workers walked the streets, demanding that Hamburg become a communist city-state. After brief battles in the city centre, the rebels and the city government agreed to set up soldiers' and workers' councils in factories, and the revolution fizzled out.

## BERLIN

■ In early 1919, war veterans crushed a communist uprising. Hundreds lost their lives in the street fighting that followed, which only ended with the murder of two communist leaders, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, on 15th January.



# GERMANY

## RUHR DISTRICT

■ The revolution in Germany's coal and steel region took place without a single shot being fired. Mine owners chose to pre-empt the workers' potential demands and immediately introduced an eight-hour working day while also recognising the unions – these two measures helped dissipate worker anger.

## THÜRINGEN

■ The area's seven small principalities fell without a fight. The princes fled, and the revolutionaries unified the area into a free state, before quickly agreeing to submit to German rule.

## MUNICH

■ Bavarian King Louis III (below) went on the run from communist rebels. For a month, Bavaria was a socialist republic with close ties to the Soviet Union, before the Freikorps and army defeated the rebels.



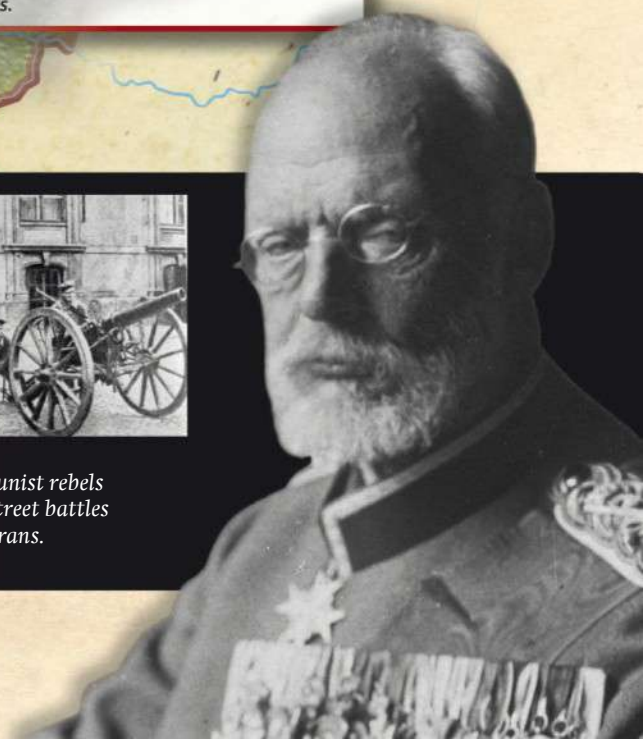
**MUNICH:**  
Soldiers remain on alert while taking on the communist uprising.



**BERLIN:**  
Government troops use field guns to try to capture a rebel position.



**BERLIN:**  
Armed communist rebels take part in street battles with war veterans.







on 19th January, 1919, declared Germany a democratic republic.

During the spring, communist rebels were defeated, and the new republic was left with just one huge task: peace talks with the post-World War I victors. The German SDP and army leadership gathered in Versailles, south-west of Paris, for

negotiations. With the threat of fresh revolutions, more fighting and widespread deprivation, the new government capitulated. It signed an exceptionally harsh peace deal that cost Germany dearly. Important territory was surrendered to France in the west, while reconstituted Poland acquired territory in Germany's east. The army was limited in size to just

100,000 men, and the Allies – led by France – demanded huge war reparations.

This compensation wasn't simply in the form of cash and gold: locomotives, coal, grain and dairy cows were also sent across the border to France. For the Germans, the conditions of peace weren't just shocking; they also ushered the country directly into poverty. A survey in autumn 1919

“ Even though membership increased tenfold... the party was still largely unknown outside of Munich ”



## FOUNDERS WERE VARIED BUNCH

*The first Nazis were a spirited ensemble of artists, workers and military men. All helped establish the Nazi Party and set the foundations for Hitler's future dictatorship. Few survived to see Germany collapse in 1945.*



**ANTON DREXLER**  
1884-1942

Locksmith

■ Drexler founded the party in 1918 to lure workers away from socialism to nationalism. He led the party for two years before Hitler took power. Drexler ended up as an honorary member with no influence.



**WILHELM FRICK**  
1877-1946

Police chief

■ From the beginning, the chief of police in Munich had strong Nazi sympathies. Frick took part in the Beer Hall Putsch and was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment for high treason, but after his release became one of the first Nazi members in the Reichstag. The former police chief ended World War II as Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. He was executed for war crimes in 1946.



**ERNST RÖHM, 1887-1934**

Army captain

■ Röhm joined the party the same year as Hitler. The two became close friends and stood side by side during the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch. In 1930, he took control of the SA Corps, which he built into Germany's largest paramilitary army. Röhm was assassinated on Hitler's orders during the Night of the Long Knives.



recorded that one in every three German school children suffered from malnutrition, while discontent lurked everywhere. Some blamed the SDP for accepting such an unjust peace, while others blamed the communists for setting the country alight. Others believed that Jews who'd served in the war had betrayed Germany.

#### SA WAS CREATED DURING UNREST

Hitler, like so many other Germans, was filled with hatred. With his new party, the Austrian war veteran found a platform through which to vent his anger. Shortly after joining, Hitler gave his first speech to an audience of 111 people in a beer cellar. Here, for the first time, he discovered his ability to hold an audience. In Munich, rumours swiftly spread about the expressive Austrian, and more and more came to listen to Hitler speak about Jewish betrayal, the need to break the Treaty of Versailles, and his visions for a restored Germany.

In November, he persuaded party leader Drexler to dip into the party's meagre funds to place ads in the local Munich newspaper, *Beobachter*. The ad campaign was a success, because while only 130 curious people attended a meeting in October, the party drew two thousand audience members to a grand meeting in Munich's stated-owned Hofbräuhaus tavern just four months later. It was here that Hitler unveiled the party's new name: henceforth, the German Workers' Party would be known as the National Socialist German Workers' Party, better known as the Nazi Party. At the same time, he announced the party's 25-point plan, a manifesto that he'd developed with Drexler.

Right in the middle of Hitler's characteristically aggressive speech, a

group of young men suddenly attempted to disrupt the meeting. The increasingly visible party had attracted the attention of political opponents, and a group of socialists and communists was trying to shout down his speech. They were quickly confronted by hardened war veterans, who let their fists speak for themselves, and the agitators were soon forced to flee "with gashed heads". Thus, the meeting not only heralded the birth of Nazism, but also the *Saalschutzabteilung* (meeting hall protection squad), who chose to wear distinctive brown shirts as their uniform. The unofficial bodyguards shortly changed their name to *Sturmabteilung* (Storm section), better known as the SA.

#### PARTY PURCHASED LOCAL PAPER

Despite the growing interest in its rabid message, only 193 names were on the Nazi Party's membership list at the start of 1920. Members were drawn from all backgrounds, including manual labourers, office workers, public servants, schoolteachers, artists and university professors. Hitler saw this diversity as a sign of the party's broad appeal. Together with Anton Drexler and propaganda chief Karl Harrer – a former sport journalist – he intensified his efforts in broadening the reach of the Nazi message.

The three men met with local army representatives, who enthusiastically listened to their words about halting the communist scourge and agreed to support the party on a monthly basis with a small financial contribution. The Nazis received similar backing from a local magazine publisher – Julius Lehmann – who longed for a party that could lure workers away from the despised socialism into German nationalism. At the same time, a Munich



On 24th February, 1920, Hitler was able to present the Nazis' first manifesto at the Munich Bräuhaus. Two thousand supporters listened enthusiastically to demands for a racially pure Germany and the repeal of the Treaty of Versailles.

factory owner donated a large sum of money to the party, earmarked to help purchase a newspaper to disseminate the party's propaganda. Eyes fell on the local – and near-

bankrupt – *Munich Beobachter* (*Munich Observer*) which, with a circulation of eight thousand, could spread Nazism's message more widely. Immediately after its acquisition, the newspaper was renamed *Völkischer Beobachter*, and served as the party's official voice until 1945.

#### HITLER STRUCK A CHORD

The small monthly donations were used to disseminate propaganda. The Nazis printed red posters to attract the working class, and volunteers ensured they appeared throughout Munich's streets. Meetings were moved from the small, smoky beer cellars to large, rented banquet rooms, where people flocked to hear Hitler speak.

Patiently, they listened to the dull lectures from other speakers just to catch a glimpse of the alluring pale Austrian. Cheers broke out when he stood up on the tables to ensure everyone could see him. From here, he launched into his speeches that frequently lasted more than two hours. Points were emphasised with forceful hand gestures, raised toes and swoon-like body movements. Often he would push back a lock of hair from his face with a quick hand gesture, while a rare fire burned behind his intense blue eyes.

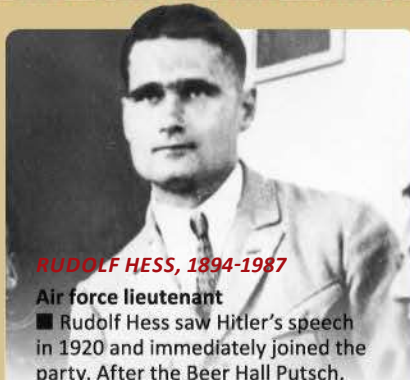
Hans Frank, who 20 years later would become the notorious Nazi governor of ►

Members of *Stoßtrupp*-Hitler on exercise in 1923. The group formed Hitler's personal bodyguard and was renamed the SS in 1925.



#### DIETRICH ECKART 1868-1923

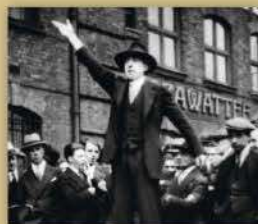
**Newspaper editor**  
■ Eckart was among the party founders and edited its newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*. He took part in the Beer Hall Putsch but died shortly afterwards of a heart attack. Hitler dedicated parts of *Mein Kampf* to Eckart.



#### RUDOLF HESS, 1894-1987

##### Air force lieutenant

■ Rudolf Hess saw Hitler's speech in 1920 and immediately joined the party. After the Beer Hall Putsch, he became Hitler's right-hand man, private secretary and one-time political heir. The former pilot took off for Britain in a fighter plane in 1941. After the war, he was sentenced to life imprisonment at Nuremberg and was incarcerated in Berlin until his death, aged 94.



#### ALFRED ROSENBERG 1893-1946

##### Architect

■ Alfred Rosenberg joined the party in January 1919. He's regarded as the ideologue behind the Nazi racial theory and Lebensraum. Rosenberg was sentenced to death after the war and hanged in 1946.



#### HERMANN GÖRING 1893-1946

##### Flying ace

■ Göring joined the Nazi Party in 1922. Hitler admired the intelligent fighter pilot who developed the SA. He had to flee abroad after the Beer Hall Putsch but returned in 1927. Later, Göring became President of the Reichstag, Minister President of Prussia and Luftwaffe supreme commander. He committed suicide in 1946.





# “Germans ventured into forests to gather nuts, berries and mushrooms”

Poland, was – like many others – instantly enthralled. Frank noted Hitler’s shabby blue suit and loosely fastened tie, but also that he spoke from the heart.

“I was strongly impressed straight away. It was totally different from what was otherwise to be heard in meetings,” he later said of Hitler. He was one of many to immediately join the party, but even though membership increased tenfold to two thousand by the end of 1920, the party was still largely unknown outside of Munich.

## HITLER SEIZED POWER

Among the angry and resentful joining the Nazi Party in 1920 were a few who would become influential members. Ernst Röhm, army captain, had been responsible for arming Bavarian civil defence units. Student Rudolf Hess was also drawn to Hitler by his oratory. He considered the Austrian a genius, and labelled him “the leader personality who alone is able to carry through the struggle”. The industrious Hess was appointed Hitler’s personal secretary soon after.

Although the locksmith Drexler was still the party’s chairman, most people now considered Hitler the real head of the Nazis. As de facto leader, he was paid by the party and spent his time reading newspapers and writing articles and speeches. When Hitler did become chair in mid-1921, he did so on the proviso he be given full control over all decisions, and an overwhelming

*Hyperinflation meant money earned one day was worthless by the next. Instead, bread and potatoes became a common form of payment. This circus also accepted homemade jam.*

majority of members voted in favour. The Nazis were now under the absolute rule of their single-minded leader. As one of his first acts, Hitler reorganised his meeting hall protection squad along professional lines. The paramilitary SA would soon come to wider attention when pilot Hermann Göring joined the Nazi corps.

Göring was a national war hero after securing over 20 aerial victories during World War I, and his entry attracted attention throughout Germany. Göring was given the task of building up the SA, and although he only headed the brownshirts for a year, Hitler was more than happy with the young pilot’s efforts. “I liked him... He’s the only one of its heads who ran the SA properly. I gave him a dishevelled rabble. In a very short time he had organised a division of 11 thousand men,” Hitler said in 1942.

## TELEPHONE POLES TRIGGERED CRISIS

In 1923, French soldiers marched into the Ruhr industrial region of Germany and took control of its factories. Under the Treaty of Versailles, Germany had agreed to pay 132 billion gold marks in war reparations. The amount was to be met with regular payments in both cash and kind. As a result, gold, coal and steel flowed across the border with all kinds of goods. But when the Germans failed to deliver 200 thousand telephone poles, France decided to enforce the Versailles treaty by force. Its invasion of the Ruhr brought over three million Germans under French military rule. In protest, the area’s inhabitants began a passive resistance. Mass strikes broke out throughout the industrial area and work in the mines stopped.

The ensuing shortage of commodities led to an explosion in prices, and Germany suddenly found itself in the middle of the most bizarre inflation episode in history. At its peak, people ran through the streets with their wages in wheelbarrows, intent on buying food before the bundles of banknotes dropped in value. A paid monthly salary lost all value within days. People could not afford coal or to pay their gas bills. Many couldn’t even afford food. Instead,

Germans ventured into forests, where they gathered nuts, berries and mushrooms, while professional gangs stripped fields of everything from potatoes to cabbages. Farmers were forced to hire armed men to protect their goods. The *Daily Mail* reported that Berlin’s stores were updating

their price tags on an hourly basis. One morning in July, its German correspondent saw a record player being sold for 500 thousand marks. When he returned five hours later, its price had risen 24-fold.

Besides rendering money worthless, inflation also ate into Germans’ savings.


Pensions that had looked secure in 1922 would now not even buy a pack of butter. The Reichsbank’s printing presses ran 24-7, spitting out banknotes with numbers in the millions, billions and even



**EYEWITNESS**

**VICTOR KLEMPERER / Hyperinflation 1923**

### WAGES WERE WORTHLESS



“Germany is collapsing in an eerie, step-by-step manner... Yesterday I waited for money in the university cashier’s office the whole morning, up to almost 2 o’clock, and in the end I didn’t get a penny, not even what was left from the October payment, since the dollar rose yesterday from 65 to 130 billion, so today I will have to pay my gas bill and other things at twice yesterday’s price. In the case of gas, that is likely to make a difference of a good 150 billion.”

**36 billion**

marks was the price of 500 grams of pork in 1923. Beer cost four billion marks.





Hitler's coup. A year earlier, Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini had marched with 20 thousand men from Milan to Rome to take power. Now the Nazis planned to follow in the fascists' footsteps. First, they would gain backing from army generals and von Kahr to proclaim a new republic under Nazi rule in Munich. Then, Hitler's army of brownshirts would march on Berlin and demand he be appointed chancellor.

### HITLER DECLARED REVOLUTION

On Hitler's order, chaos broke out in Munich on 8th November, 1923. In the Bürgerbräukeller beer hall, von Kahr was making a speech to three thousand Nazi sympathisers as the SA burst into the hall. The crowd was further amazed when a heavy machine gun was pushed through the front door, immediately followed by Hitler flanked by two bodyguards.

"The national revolution has broken out!" he yelled into the crowded room, where the audience jostled with each other to get a better view of his entrance. In the tumult, few had heard Hitler's proclamation, so he jumped on a chair, pulled out his gun, and – pointing it at the ceiling – fired.

"The national revolution has broken out! The hall is filled with 600 men. Nobody is allowed to leave," he roared again.

Contrary to their agreement, State Commissioner von Kahr did not stand up to support Hitler, who had to suffer the ignominy of standing alone with his call to arms. Enraged, Hitler pulled von Kahr into an adjoining room and demanded the state commissioner's backing. After being promised an important post in the new regime, the Bavarian politician appeared to once again affirm his support for the putsch. In fact, von Kahr spent the rest of the evening secretly planning how the Bavarian police would strike it down.

### TWO THOUSAND NAZIS MARCHED

When Hitler returned to the hall, 58-year-old General Erich Ludendorff had joined the rebels. He was a German national hero after a series of spectacular victories ▶



trillions. Eventually, the bank gave up. Instead, old notes were simply stamped with their new value. In German cities, the populace starved. Winter was approaching and no one could afford to buy coal for heating. Here, four years after civil war raged, communist revolutions broke out again in several cities. At the same time, war veterans who felt humiliated by the French invasion of the Ruhr district swarmed to the Nazi banner. In no time, 20 thousand men had enrolled in Göring's SA Corps.

### GERMANY MUST BE TAKEN BY FORCE

In November 1923, the increasingly ambitious Hitler decided to seize power in Germany by force. He had a massive army of brownshirts behind him and the backing of senior army officers. At the

same time, he allied himself with the former Minister-President of Bavaria, Gustav Ritter von Kahr. Von Kahr had been appointed state commissioner with dictatorial powers and agreed to support

TECHNOLOGY.....
CULTURE.....
ECONOMY.....
EVERYDAY.....

## Berlin was centre of decadence

In the 1920s, the German capital was buzzing with life. In the nightclubs' cabaret performances, African-Germans, dancers and transvestites danced side by side, while hetero- and homosexuals enjoyed contemporary US jazz. Traditional German values

were seen by many to have dissolved into uncontrolled liberalism and frivolity in the space of a few years. The capital became publicly known as "sinful Babylon", and older Germans made no effort to hide their yearning for the strict imperial morality of yesteryear.





# THE BIRTH OF A PARTY

From their earliest days, Nazis were acutely aware of the importance of visibility. The acquisition of newspapers ensured their messages reached a wide audience, and selling cigarettes acted as a clandestine advertisement while also helping to fund the growing SA militia. Hitler's artistic ambitions were met by the creation of the party's iconic swastika flag to make an impression on the streets, and membership cards were faked to make the party appear larger than it was.



Peaked cap from the Stahlhelm Bund der Frontsoldaten paramilitary organisation. The swastika shows the wearer supported the Nazis.



Party membership card belonging to Adolf Hitler.



One of Hitler's early sketches of a potential swastika flag.



Party cigarettes. Proceeds from their sale went towards funding the SA corps.

Various SA pins for attaching to the SA uniform.



against the Russians during World War I. Ludendorff's fear of the communists had led him to join the coup, although he was not a member of the Nazi Party.

The next day, two thousand Nazis marched on the Munich War Ministry. They sang the *Stürmlied* (Storm Song), and some spectators responded spontaneously again with cries of "Heil Hitler". As the

procession entered the Odeonsplatz in central Munich, Hitler moved to the front. Beside him, along with General Ludendorff, were several future senior Nazis, including Röhm, Hess and Göring.

Along the Residentzstrasse at Odeonsplatz, police blocked the marchers' route. During the night, the force had been assembled by von Kahr, who'd clearly switched sides again. The Nazi leader would never forget this betrayal – 11 years later, he had the Bavarian politician murdered during the Night of the Long Knives. But back in the streets of Munich in 1923, Hitler ordered his mob forward. Suddenly, gunshots rang out in the square, and Hitler threw himself to the ground. His

left shoulder was dislocated, and his SA bodyguards pulled their leader into a nearby car in a side street. Hitler was driven swiftly from the scene, while Göring, who had been shot in the thigh, also managed to escape. Together with Rudolf Hess, he ended up in Austria, returning only after an amnesty in 1927. Röhm was arrested, while Ludendorff survived the heavy fire unscathed. He reached police lines and surrendered, immediately released on his word as an officer. Rumours that Ludendorff never spoke to Hitler again because he considered the Austrian a coward were recently repudiated.

The chaotic battle lasted less than a minute, and as Hitler was driven away in a car, four police officers and 14 putschists were left dead on the cobbled street.

## NAZI PARTY WAS RAIDED

Immediately after its defeat, the Nazi Party was struck by raids. Its offices were stormed in the pursuit of Hitler. *Völkischer Beobachter* was immediately shut down and banned. Hitler himself was found by police in a party supporter's home just south of Munich. When he was arrested, the Nazi leader was dressed in a white nightshirt, his dislocated left arm in a sling. According to

## MEANWHILE, IN ITALY

### FASCISTS SEIZED POWER

In 1919, Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini (left) created the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian Combat Squad). Its aim was to bring order to troubled Italian cities. The means of enforcing this was through paramilitary groups known as Blackshirts.

In 1922, Mussolini marched on Rome and seized power. A cult quickly shot up around *Il Duce* (The Leader). Hitler never hid his admiration for Mussolini. He was hugely influenced by *Il Duce*'s fascist party, and the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch was an attempt to directly copy its takeover of power.





Remington Portable, 1924 model. Hitler wrote the first part of Mein Kampf on this typewriter.



Newspaper cart for Völkischer Beobachter. The paper was purchased by the Nazi Party in 1920.



Banners carried by the SA were packed with Germanic symbols.



The German eagle.

The swastika is an Indian symbol of happiness.

Abbreviation for the party name: National Socialist Deutsche Arbeiterpartei.



The inscription Deutschland Erwache (Germany Awakening) is inspired by a Nazi anthem.

The red colour reflects the party's attempts to attract socialist support.



the house's residents, Hitler had considered suicide, but had been dissuaded from taking his own life. Police officers drove their important prisoner to the prison in the old fortress of Landsberg am Lech, where he was locked in cell number 7.

For most of the citizens of Bavaria, Hitler's arrest came as a relief. Author Stefan Zweig spoke emotionally of the time when "swastikas and stormtroops disappeared, and the name Adolf Hitler fell back almost into oblivion".

Together with Röhm and several other Nazis, Hitler was tried in February



Adolf Hitler during the Munich election campaign, 1923. A few months later, he tried to take power in a violent coup.

1924. General Ludendorff was also among the defendants. The accused had committed high treason, caused the deaths of four policemen and had held government officials hostage. Punishment would usually be harsh – often traitors paid with their lives. But the lawsuit quickly developed into a scandal. The prosecutor failed to summon key witnesses and stole evidence that would have harmed the accused shortly before proceedings began.

#### JUDGES SIDED WITH HITLER

Public prosecutors, like the German judiciary, were notoriously right-wing, and nationalists were usually given mild punishments for crimes carried out for

what were deemed patriotic reasons. Judge Georg Neithardt made no effort to conceal the fact he regarded the Beer Hall Putsch as the Nazis' attempt to protect Germany from the communist scourge.

Hitler took full advantage of the trial to exploit it for his own ends. The whole of Germany followed the reports from the courtrooms, and the Nazi leader enjoyed his opportunity to finally address the entire German nation. He showed up in the courtroom wearing his Iron Cross, awarded during World War I. He spoke in grandiose terms of his love for the Fatherland and his dogged determination to defend Germany.

In the space of a few weeks, Hitler went from local Bavarian rebel to being known





# “The biggest moment of Hitler’s life had gone terribly wrong”

all over Germany as the man who’d done his utmost to save the Fatherland at its most difficult moment. On 1st April, 1924, Adolf Hitler was sentenced to five years in prison – an exceptionally lenient sentence

Ludendorff was acquitted. The court found that the general had been unaware of what had gone on – a pretext that offended Ludendorff. Ernst Röhm was also convicted, but immediately released.

## HITLER APPOINTED HIS HEIR

The biggest moment of Hitler’s life had gone terribly wrong. He himself was imprisoned, his closest allies were in exile abroad, his stormtroopers disbanded, and the party banned from running in upcoming elections. Immediately after the verdict, Hitler summoned loyal party member Alfred Rosenberg to an audience in the Landsberg prison. The Nazi leader had decided to hand over control of the party to the 30-year-old architect, who had been with him since the beginning. Rosenberg was recognised among Nazi members as the mastermind behind the Nazi Aryan racial theories. But although he enjoyed wide support within the party, Hitler viewed the thoughtful Rosenberg as lazy and unambitious. With the architect in charge, Hitler’s power would be challenged during the five years he’d be spending in prison. At the same time,



The Beer Hall Putsch defendants. Hitler (fourth from the right) is flanked by future SA leader Ernst Röhm and General Ludendorff.

Rosenberg was loyal in the extreme. As his first act, he sent postcards of Hitler’s portrait to local party groups, sport associations and right-wing clubs. Here he wrote that Adolf Hitler’s name should never be forgotten.

At the Reichstag elections in May 1924, Hitler and Rosenberg devised a method to circumvent the party’s electoral

ban. The Nazis simply stood under the German Völkisch Freedom Party’s banner. In the wake of Hitler’s media-fuelled trial, the Nazis achieved their best results yet. Just over two million Germans – around 6.5 percent of the electorate – voted for the electoral union. The two parties, which called themselves the National Socialist Freedom Movement, secured 32 seats out of 472 in the Reichstag.

But just six months later, in the December elections, the Germans had forgotten about the trial and Hitler’s nationalist monologues. The movement’s votes more than halved – fewer than one million voted for the coalition, leaving them with just 14 seats. At the same time, the economic crisis in Germany passed. The republic settled down and most Germans experienced a short period of relative prosperity.

Hitler, on the other hand, spent his days in Landsberg Prison devising far-reaching, ambitious plans for his, the Nazis’ and Germany’s future. ■

## FROM HOMELESS TO CELEBRITY

In 1913, Hitler struggled through life by selling his own watercolour paintings. Ten years later, all of Germany followed the trial of the Austrian revolutionary.



1889

Adolf Hitler enters the world on 20th April at the Gasthof zum Pommer inn in Braunau, Austria.



1907

Hitler’s mother Klara dies from breast cancer, four years after the death of his father, customs officer Alois Hitler.

1907

The Academy of Fine Arts Vienna rejects the 18-year-old Hitler, who desperately wants to become an artist. To make ends meet, Hitler sells amateur paintings on the streets.

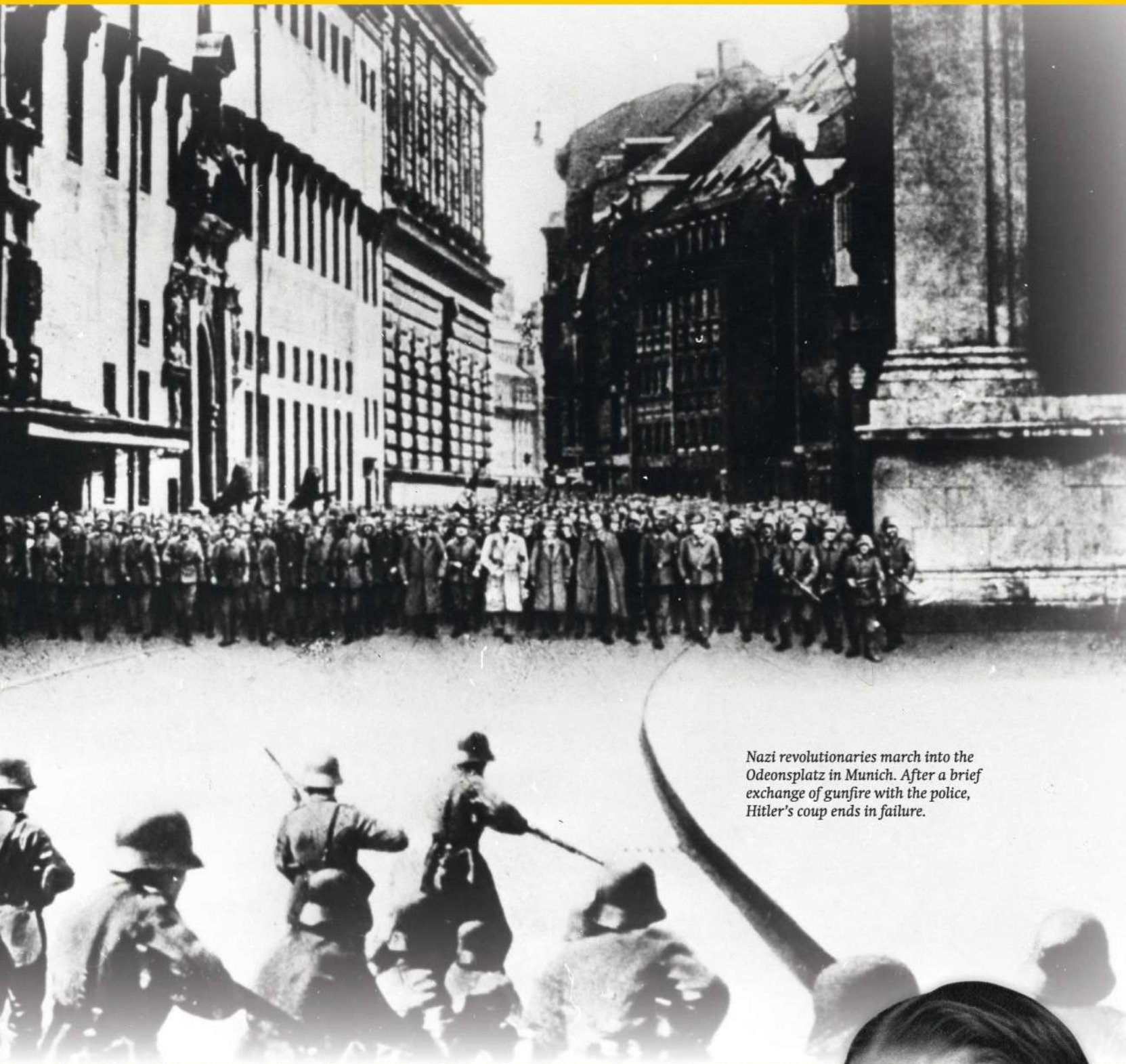
1909

Hitler is again rejected by the Academy of Fine Arts. The orphaned Austrian gives his inheritance to his younger sister. By the end of the year, he is living in a homeless shelter. For the next four years, Hitler struggles to survive on the Viennese streets.

1913

To avoid military service, Hitler moves to Munich. German policemen arrest the Austrian immigrant and send him back to enlist. Ironically, a doctor declares him unfit to serve in the Austro-Hungarian army.





*Nazi revolutionaries march into the Odeonsplatz in Munich. After a brief exchange of gunfire with the police, Hitler's coup ends in failure.*

**1914**

World War I breaks out. Hitler petitions the King of Bavaria to fight for Germany. He serves as a dispatch runner and is awarded the Iron Cross for bravery.



**1918**

Hitler spends months in a military hospital in Germany, blinded by mustard gas. After being discharged, he is employed as a spy in the army intelligence service.

**1919**

Joins the German Workers' Party, which later becomes the Nazi Party.

**1921**

Nazi Party members elect Hitler as dictatorial leader.



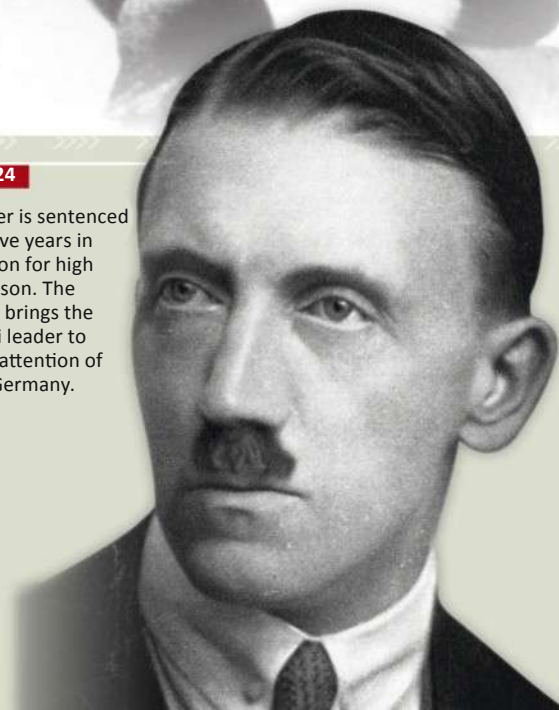
**1923**

Adolf Hitler tries to seize power in Germany. The putsch fails.

**1924**

Hitler is sentenced to five years in prison for high treason. The trial brings the Nazi leader to the attention of all Germany.

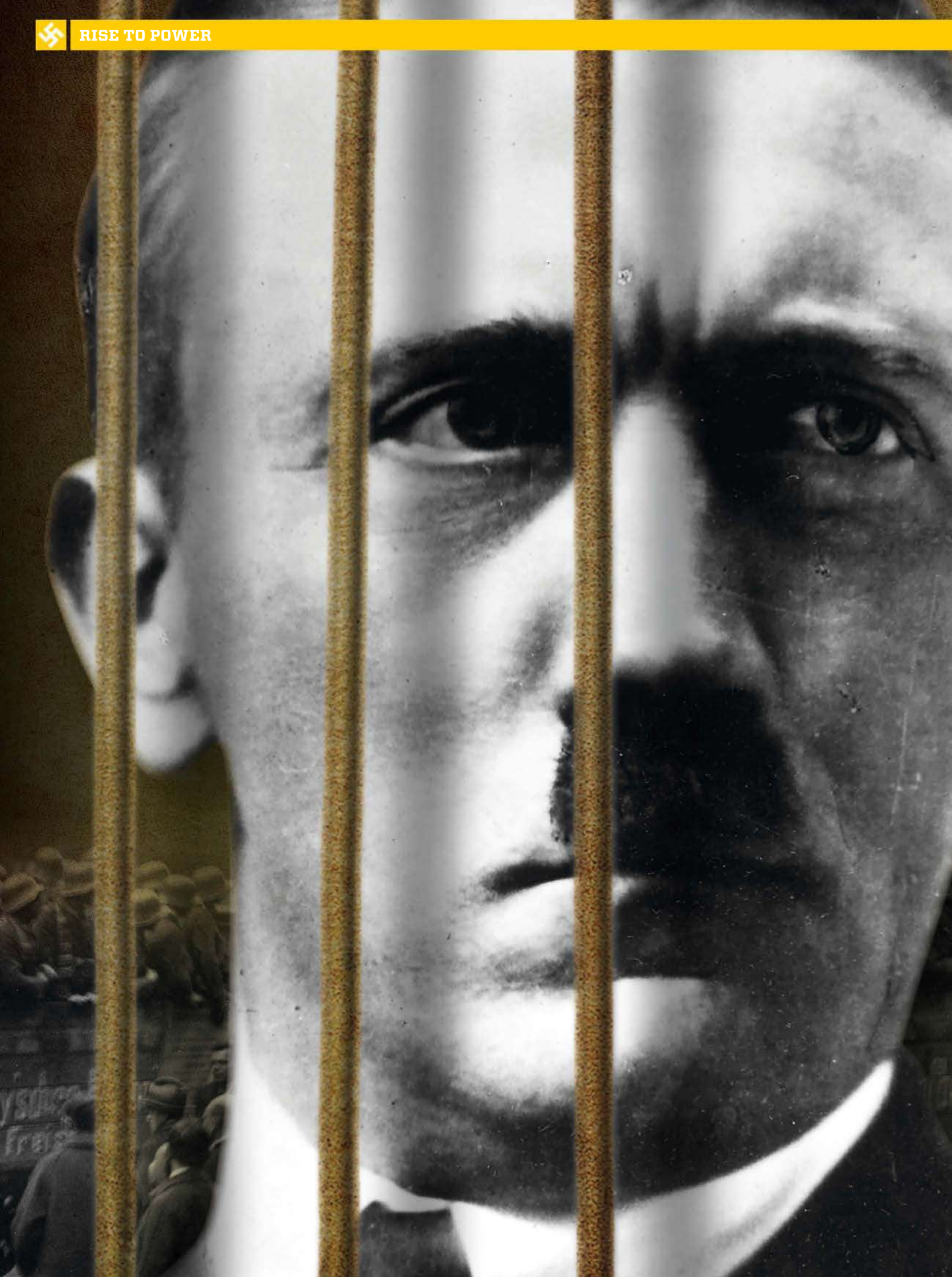
1924







RISE TO POWER





# HITLER

## behind bars

Adolf Hitler was locked up for eight months, and lost control of the Nazi Party. He thought he was out of luck.

GETTY IMAGES & IMAGESELECT

**The Beer Hall Putsch** in Munich was legally treated as high treason – and its leader, Adolf Hitler, risked life imprisonment. But the Nazi leader had many sympathisers, making his punishment more tolerable. And in prison, Hitler was left in peace to develop the Nazi ideology – and enjoy a mountain of cream cakes.

### MUNICH/1923

Defeat in World War I led to a violent economic and political crisis in Germany. The situation worsened when France occupied the Ruhr industrial region in 1923, to ensure it received the compensation it was owed for war damage. The Bavarian state government attempted to calm the situation by appointing a de facto dictator (known as the state commissioner). Bavaria was on the verge of separating from Germany.







BY ELSE CHRISTENSEN &amp; TORSTEN WEPER

**T**he room was packed as the court met in Munich. For 24 days, the state attorney had questioned the men behind the so-called Beer Hall Putsch – an attempt to overthrow the German government in November 1923. The charges sounded like high treason, a particularly serious crime, punishable by life imprisonment. The final hearing was on 27th March 1924, and the coup's leader, 34-year-old Adolf Hitler, was allowed to address the court: "For it is not you who will speak that final judgment... but the goddess of the final court... called 'history'... She will not ask: did you commit high treason? In her eyes [we] are those who wanted the best for our country. Even if you pronounce us guilty a thousand times over, the eternal goddess of the eternal court will laughingly tear up the prosecutor's indictment and the judgment of this court. She will pronounce us not guilty!" On his chest, he wore the Iron Cross he'd received for bravery in World War I.

But it wasn't the goddess who was in charge of sentencing. The earthly evidence was against him and the judges found him guilty, although the sentence was astonishingly lenient: just five years in prison, with the possibility of parole after six months. And in a heartbeat, that judgment transformed Hitler from a traitor into a martyr for the Nazi Party.

Hitler later boasted that prison was his "state-paid university", and the failed coup had perhaps been the greatest luck of his life.

#### On the brink of suicide

The word "luck" wouldn't be the first to spring to mind when 1923's Beer Hall Putsch descended



BAYARIAN STATE ARCHIVES

*The Berlin government – dubbed the "November Criminals" – is overthrown, claimed the Nazis during 1923's putsch.*

into a massacre in the middle of the Odeonsplatz in Munich. Police shot into the group of Nazis; 16 died. Hitler managed to escape via a side street and was driven to the village of Uffing, where his friend Ernst Hanfstaengl lived. Hanfstaengl himself had fled to Austria to avoid the police, but his wife, Helene, opened the door for the Nazi leader.

A few days later, the house was surrounded by seven officers, and Hitler fell into the deepest despair. "This is the end. I will never let those swine take me. I will shoot myself first," he shouted. However, Helene Hanfstaengl wrestled the gun from his hand and stopped him killing himself.

When the trial began on 26th February 1924, the Nazi leader realised that he could use the court as a platform for sharing his thoughts on revolution. He and the other accused gunmen arrived in court standing proud, none of them

wearing prison uniform, as was customary for detainees. Instead, they wore a dark suit, like Hitler, or the brown-shirted uniform of the Nazi *Sturmabteilung* (SA) storm troopers. Once everyone was seated, Hitler stood for a whole minute surveying the scene.

The men in the dock had reason to be confident: Hitler and his ideas enjoyed wide sympathy, and his attempted coup had been met with support from the top levels of society. Munich was the German stronghold of the Nazi Party, and they could count on the sympathy of the judge, Georg Neithardt. Hitler was allowed to behave as he pleased; during the first hearing, he spoke for almost four hours without interruption.

Among the witnesses were Gustav Ritter von Kahr and two other prominent members of the state government, who had supported Hitler during the first hours of the coup.

Kahr had been a key figure for Hitler in his coup attempt; a few months previously, Kahr had been appointed Bavarian commissioner-general – a post that gave him almost dictatorial powers, as well as command of the military.

Although Hitler was charged with high treason, Neithardt allowed him to cross-examine Gustav Ritter von Kahr. The Nazi leader pointed out that on the night of the attempted coup, Kahr had shaken his hand, agreeing to conduct the coup together. To intimidate Kahr, Hitler approached him and roared, "Am I a liar here or am I not?"

Judge Neithardt made a half-hearted plea to Hitler: "Don't get worked up, please. The witness will answer."

"Am I now a liar or am I not one?" Hitler screamed again, waving his arms.

Kahr replied that he had no recollection of having shaken hands with Hitler over anything. But the former commissioner-general seemed broken, and sank deep into his chair.

"What a tremendous man," remarked one of the lay judges.

#### Hitler lives a life of luxury

Both the court's treatment of Hitler and the lenient sentence shocked people at home and abroad. The verdict was "an excellent joke for All Fools' Day", the *New York Times* said, while the leftist German magazine *Die Weltbühne* warned: "Judicial murder has been carried out against the republic in Munich."

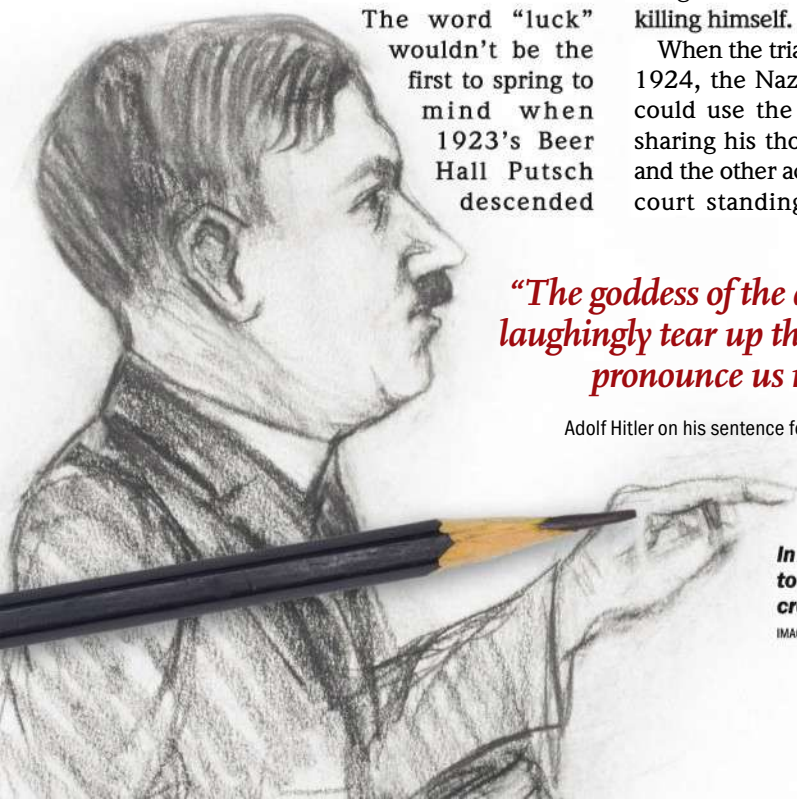
Hitler's supporters, in turn, were thrilled. Many had arrived at court ►

*"The goddess of the eternal court will laughingly tear up the indictment and pronounce us not guilty!"*

Adolf Hitler on his sentence for high treason in 1924

*In court, Hitler was free to speak at length and cross-examine witnesses.*

IMAGESELECT





# Coup ended in bloodbath

The Beer Hall Putsch should have given Hitler control of the army; then he'd have been able to send soldiers to Berlin to overthrow the government. But after a few minutes, 16 Nazis were dead.

On 8th November 1923, a large number of Munich's elite and the Bavarian government was assembled in the Bürgerbräukeller – the city's great meeting place. At 20.30, Adolf Hitler entered the hall and fired his Browning gun into the ceiling.

"The national revolution has begun!" he shouted, adding that the hall was surrounded by 600 heavily armed men and that the Bavarian government had been deposed and the military barracks taken over.

He ordered three leading members of the Bavarian government – including Commissioner-General Gustav Ritter von Kahr – into a side room, where he demanded their loyalty at gunpoint.

Out in the hall, Prime Minister Knilling and the city's police chief were seized and taken away by SA man Rudolf Hess. Hitler's coup appeared to have succeeded, but the three government members

managed to escape and alert the police. Thus, the chance of taking power quickly in Munich was gone. Hitler despaired and later that evening threatened to kill himself.

In the desperate situation, General Ludendorff took the initiative; the World War I hero organised a march for the following morning.

About 2,000 Nazis joined the rally that started in front of the Bürgerbräukeller. Many were armed. Their goal was to retain control of the Bavarian military, which would then march against Berlin and topple the German government – just as Mussolini had done the year before with his 'march on Rome'.

When the marching Nazis reached Odeonsplatz, they were met by approximately 130 policemen. The officers opened fire, and after a brief fight, 14 Nazis and four officers died. Hitler managed to escape via a side street.

Armed SA members took up several positions in Munich.

IMAGESELECT

## Hitler's coup hour by hour



### 1 Bürgerbräukeller 8th November, 20.30:

Hitler storms the beer hall, filled with 3,000 people. He declares that "the national revolution has begun" and secures the support of the Bavarian government. No one is allowed to leave.

**Same evening:** Nazi SA storm troopers occupy the 2 police headquarters and 3 war ministry in the city. Meanwhile, Hitler loses government support and the police block the city.

### 4 Bürgerbräukeller 9th November, 05.00:

After a night's doubt, Hitler assures his followers that he will fight and die for the cause.

**5 Odeonsplatz, 12.45:** Many houses are decorated with swastika flags and groups of Nazis go looting. About 2,000 National Socialists march from the beer hall to Odeonsplatz. Here, 130 officers are waiting. Hitler urges them to surrender, but the police open fire; 18 people die.







bearing flowers, and according to the legal record, the courtroom resounded with cheers of "Heil!" Before Hitler and his associates were taken to Landsberg prison, they were applauded by a large crowd outside the court.

After a 60 km drive, the Nazi leader reached Landsberg and was proclaimed a "prisoner of honour". He was given cell number seven – a particularly bright and spacious room on the first floor. It was furnished with a bed, bedside table and armchair. The light poured in through

large windows, whose narrow bars didn't spoil the view of the city.

From day one, letters and gifts arrived for the prisoner. Many of the packages contained food, and Hitler's cell was soon named 'The Delicatessen'. "You could have opened a flower shop, a vegetable shop and a wine store with all the stuff that piled up," noted friend Ernst Hanfstaengl, who had been arrested following the coup attempt, and now served as a liaison

between the imprisoned Nazi leader and the party.

Hitler's 35th birthday on 20th April didn't go unnoticed. "His quarters and the common room looked like a forest of flowers. It smelled like a greenhouse," prison guard Otto Lurker commented.

However, the best gift had to be what the Nazi leader read in the newspapers. The day was marked by a party in the Bürgerbräukeller – the beer hall where

## Prisoners lived a life of luxury

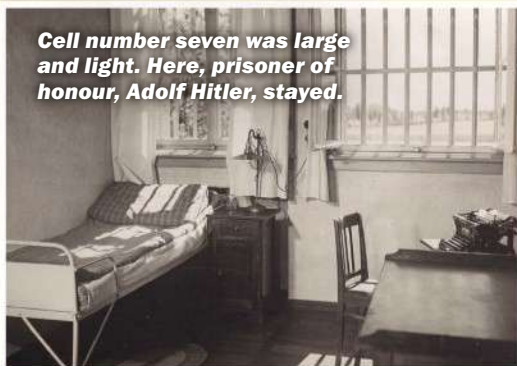
**Nazi prisoners had a great time in Landsberg, but that changed in 1945 when it became a place of execution for German war criminals.**

Landsberg prison was inaugurated in 1908 according to the period's most far-sighted theories regarding the rehabilitation of criminals. With Bavaria's lenient treatment of Hitler and the other rebels, the Nazis' imprisonment came to resemble more of a stay in a guesthouse than a punishment.

The prisoners were able to wear civilian clothes and keep personal belongings, such as pocket knives. Cleaning, cooking and laundry were done for them; the prisoners only had to make their beds.

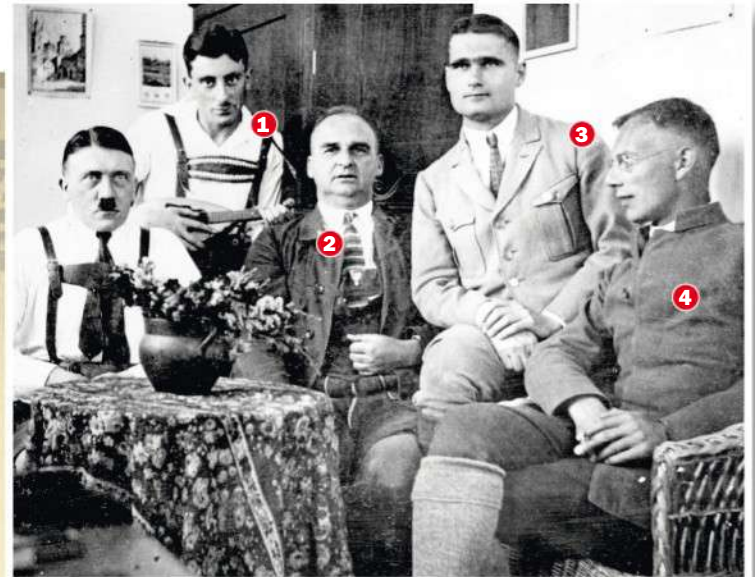
The humane conditions ended when the Nazis seized power in 1933. After Germany's defeat in 1945, Landsberg became the Allies' most-important prison for German war criminals; 288 prisoners were executed in War Criminal Prison No. 1 before the prison was returned to the German authorities in 1958.

**Cell number seven was large and light. Here, prisoner of honour, Adolf Hitler, stayed.**



**Opened in 1908, Landsberg still functions as a Bavarian penal facility.**

IMAGESELECT



Adolf Hitler in the prison common room with **1** his private driver, Emil Maurice, **2** SA officer Hermann Kriebel, **3** secretary Rudolf Hess and **4** Dr Friedrich Weber.

## Everyday life in Landsberg

**07.30:** Prisoners are served breakfast.

**08.00–11.00:** Opportunity to work, such as chopping wood. Work is optional and paid. Prisoners get half a litre of beer.

**11.30:** Lunch in the dining room. Prisoners can buy luxuries with their own money, including beer and wine. The afternoon is free. Most prisoners drink tea and take a nap.

**19.45:** Dinner. Thereafter, the evening is free – for example, to go to the prison garden, play games, partake in sport, or gather for music and singing.

Central tower

Prison wing

Prison wing

Entrance



## Beer Hall Putsch helped Nazi careers

### Heinrich Himmler (1900-1945)

Participated in the planning and implementation of the coup, but the slight Himmler could only be used as a flag-bearer. Police failed to charge him due to lack of evidence. Himmler later became SS leader and chief of police.

### Rudolf Hess (1894-1987)

Hess was to take important people hostage during the coup. In prison, he became Hitler's private secretary. In 1933, he became Hitler's deputy.

### Hermann Göring (1893-1946)

The World War I pilot was leader of the SA. During the shootout, Göring was hit in the thigh. He fled Germany and in 1925 settled in Sweden, his wife's homeland. Göring numbed the pain in his leg with morphine, leading to drug addiction. Hitler appointed him head of the Luftwaffe in 1935.

### Emil Maurice (1897-1972)

Hitler's private driver and bodyguard. Maurice was fired when, in 1927, he began a relationship with Hitler's niece, 19-year-old Geli Raubal. She later committed suicide.

### Ernst Röhm (1887-1934)

During the coup, Röhm was responsible for the occupation of the Bavarian war ministry. He received a conditional sentence and was subsequently killed in "The Night of the Long Knives".

### Ernst Hanfstaengl (1887-1975)

The publisher's son became a Nazi in 1920 and used his contacts to spread the party's message. Appointed Hitler's foreign spokesman, he later fell into disrepute and fled to Britain in 1937.

### Heinrich Hoffmann (1885-1957)

The press photographer joined the Nazi Party in 1920 and became Hitler's personal photographer. He covered the Beer Hall Putsch as a reporter, and in the following years made a fortune publishing Hitler books and postcards.

### Josef Terboven (1898-1945)

Studied in Munich and joined the Nazi Party shortly before the coup. His career peaked when he became commissioner of state for Norway in 1940.

### Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937)

The WWI general was the best known of the plotters and led the march. In court, he was acquitted of complicity; a decision the war hero found defamatory.

Hitler had begun his coup attempt. Here, 3,000 Nazi Party members, World War I veterans, and supporters of other nationalist movements gathered to celebrate the man who had "sparked the current flame behind the idea of liberty and the ethnic consciousness of the German people", as one newspaper wrote.

### Nazis in control

Hitler's political supporters happily visited him in prison. During April and May, Hitler received five or more visitors a

day, from all over Germany, as prison guard Otto Lurker noted:

"Every social class and age was represented. There were bearded men in lederhosen and crudely nailed shoes, cosmopolitan men from industry and high society, clergymen of both Christian confessions, rural middle-lower-class folks, lawyers, former military officers, professors, farmers, artists, day labourers, aristocrats, booksellers, publishers and newspaper editors. All of them came – sometimes for the strangest of reasons."

Female admirers also flocked to visit Hitler and give him gifts and cream cakes – some of the best the Nazi leader had ever tasted.

In April, Hitler gained further companionship, as his closest co-conspirators were transferred to Landsberg to serve their sentences, too. The Nazi leader transformed the prison into his own personal barracks. The newcomers were accommodated near Hitler on the first floor, which the inmates nicknamed '*Feldherrenhügel*' ('Command Hill'). In addition, approximately 40 Nazis, who had been SA storm troopers during the coup, were also imprisoned at Landsberg. Emil Maurice, Hitler's driver, served as a liaison between the two groups.

Maurice's duties included calling newcomers to assemble. SA officer Hans Kallenbach said, "I hardly had time to look around in my cell, when Emil Maurice appeared and ordered me to report to the Führer immediately."

The contact between the 'raw mercenaries', as the SAs were known, and their Führer was limited to formal encounters, as Hitler soon

began to keep a distance from his subordinates.

When, during a visit, Ernst Hanfstaengl suggested that the now rather well-fed Adolf Hitler might benefit from participating in the prison's sports activities, the answer was an outright no: "It would be bad for discipline if I took part in physical training. A leader cannot afford to be beaten at games."

Meals developed into a display of military discipline. Former prison official Franz Hemmerich described how prisoners laid out tablecloths every day – they were against regulations, but the prison officers didn't oppose their use.

Hitler's fellow prisoners arrived in plenty of time. Standing behind their chairs, they waited for the command "Attention!" Then the Führer, with his companions, walked down the room and he took his place at the end of the table, according to fellow prisoner Hans Kallenbach. Equally, no one sat at the table before Hitler proclaimed the formal mealtime greeting "*Mahlzeit*".

After dinner, the prisoners smoked tobacco and relaxed. Hitler was the centre of attention, and his monologues could last well into the evening. "We hung dumbstruck on his words and the hours passed like minutes," recalled Kallenbach, who couldn't help but listen.

### Party shattered into factions

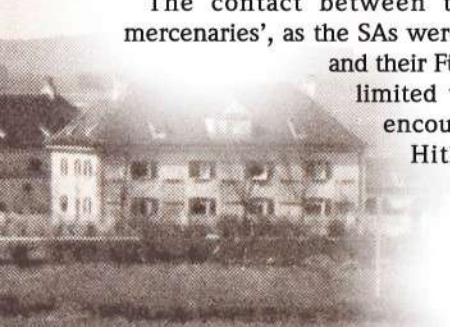
Every day, Hitler went for a walk in the prison's garden wearing lederhosen, a shirt and tie. The fresh air, good food and routine suited him, as Hitler's fellow prisoner, Rudolf Hess, wrote in a letter to his fiancée in May 1924: "He looks splendid. His face is no longer so gaunt. The enforced rest is doing him good."

But outside the prison walls, Hitler's party vanished. The authorities had banned the Nazi Party, and the movement now had to operate in secret. Shortly before his arrest, Hitler had appointed Alfred Rosenberg, editor of the party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, as interim leader. Rosenberg was highly gifted but lazy and dull – and therefore the right man to keep Hitler's chair warm without becoming a dangerous rival.

Rosenberg, however, failed to hold the Nazi Party together. Rivalry and disagreement split the party, and many ►

*"He looks splendid. His face is no longer so gaunt. The enforced rest is doing him good."*

Rudolf Hess about his fellow prisoner Adolf Hitler, Landsberg prison, 1924







disaffected members migrated to other right-wing extremist parties. Hitler realised that he could do nothing as long as he was behind bars, so he did his best to stay out of the mess until he was free. Then, he would be able to gather together the fragments of the party, resume his seat, and emerge as the Nazis' rightful leader.

The Nazi leader didn't have time to remotely lead his party anyway, because he was busy gathering his thoughts: "Herr Hitler needs time for his work on a comprehensive book," a press release announced in July 1924.

### Mein Kampf is written

The book that was to be called *Mein Kampf* had been in gestation for some time. As early as December 1923, Hitler had spoken about writing something to "rip the masks off" his political opponents. With the prison director's permission, Hitler acquired a Remington typewriter, desk and paper. Admirer Winifred Wagner (composer Richard Wagner's daughter-in-law) sent pencils, erasers, paper and other equipment. She remarked to a friend that she had no idea Hitler had literary ambitions.

In prison, Hitler began to work methodically on the book, which was initially called *4½ Jahre Kampf gegen Lüge, Dummheit und Feigheit* (*Four and a Half Years of Struggle Against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice*). Hitler mixed his own elaborated life story with his hatred of Jews and disgust for politicians, who, in his opinion, were to blame for Germany's defeat in World War I.

### Hatred of politicians and Jews

Hitler, who had never learned to type, painstakingly tapped out each word, letter by letter, in clumsy two-fingered typing. This is how the long, tortuous sentences took shape in his cell:

"Just as he [the Jew] himself systematically ruins women and girls, he does not shrink back from pulling down the blood barriers for others, even on a large scale. It was and it is Jews who bring the Negroes into the Rhineland, always with the same secret thought and clear aim..."

As a cure for society's ills, Hitler recommended "purging" unwanted

elements, along with German expansion to the east. Every Saturday, he read finished sections to his fellow prisoners. Among the audience was Rudolf Hess, who would later be appointed to the post of Hitler's deputy: "What a mixture of cold-blooded, mature superiority and uninhibited childishness," he cheered, as he heard the part about Hitler's experiences on the Western Front.

All summer, Hitler sat bent over the typewriter. To gain some peace to write, the formerly social Nazi leader asked people to refrain from visiting.

In September, Landsberg prison governor, Otto Leybold, witnessed him working "for several hours each day".

### Hitler is "harmless"

The Führer was expected to be released on parole after just six months, and the imprisoned Nazis did everything they could to demonstrate good behaviour – both to enable a quick release and to pursue their political goals. Hitler later stated that he had stressed that his comrades should behave in a way that "no one in the facility could fail to become a committed National Socialist by the time he was released".

The plan succeeded. Prison governor Otto Leybold was convinced the Nazi leader had become a good citizen during his prison stay, describing him in a report as "a man of order and discipline", who "did not make any demands" and was "at pains to accept the restrictions accompanying his incarceration".

The prison governor expected the Nazi leader to return to politics, but this time abiding by the law. "Hitler will undoubtedly return to political life. He proposes to refound and reanimate his movement, but in the future he proposes not to run counter to the authorities... During his 10 months under detention while awaiting trial and while under sentence, he has undoubtedly become more mature and calm," Leybold said in his report.

In a conversation with the prison guard Hemmerich, the governor admitted that

Hitler had made an impression on him: "When I listen to him, I could almost become a National Socialist myself." The prison guard had to agree.

### Nazis were forgotten

Munich chief of police Friedrich Tenner was still doubtful, but on 20th December, 1924, Adolf Hitler finally left prison a free man. The book, *Mein Kampf*, had not been completed, but

Emil Maurice made sure that the manuscript was smuggled out of prison, hidden inside a gramophone box.

Adolf Müller, the owner of the printing firm that took care of the Nazi Party's publications, waited by the prison gate, as did Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's personal photographer. They drove him home to his apartment in Thierschstraße, in Munich, where he was greeted by rooms filled with garlands and wreaths.

Hitler quickly resumed his old life, going to cafes and visiting acquaintances, while work on *Mein Kampf* continued. He wrote the final chapters while Rudolf

*"Hitler is a man of order and discipline. When I listen to him, I could almost become a National Socialist myself."*

Prison governor Otto Leybold, Landsberg, 1924



**Mein Kampf was published in 1925 and eventually became a German bestseller.**

GETTY IMAGES





Hess, Ernst Hanfstaengl and other trusted friends edited the text, to tighten up his arguments. They also tried to correct his writing style, which was as convoluted and explosive as his speeches. Work on the text took several weeks, before the finished manuscript could be sent to the printers.

The failed artist and uneducated, unemployed soldier could finally write "author" on his tax return to the Bavarian authorities.

"No one can say I am unknown now and that gives us a basis to start on again," Hitler explained, referring to the coup, trial and book.

But if Hitler thought the book would be a huge success, he was disappointed. Sales were slow – in 1929, after four years, only 36,000 readers had invested in a copy of the "Nazi Bible". Only with the party's electoral success in 1932 did interest rise noticeably, and the following year sales hit half a million. ■

#### FURTHER READING

● Peter Ross Range: **1924: The Year That Made Hitler**, Little, Brown and Company, 2016 ● Volker Ullrich: **Hitler: Volume I: Ascent 1889–1939**, Bodley Head, 2016 ● Adolf Hitler: **Mein Kampf**, Jaico Publishing House, 2007

## Nazi Party prepared for democratic election

**"The beast is tamed" thought German politicians, and allowed the Nazi Party to appear on ballot papers. Ten years after his prison sentence, Adolf Hitler was able to take control of the country.**

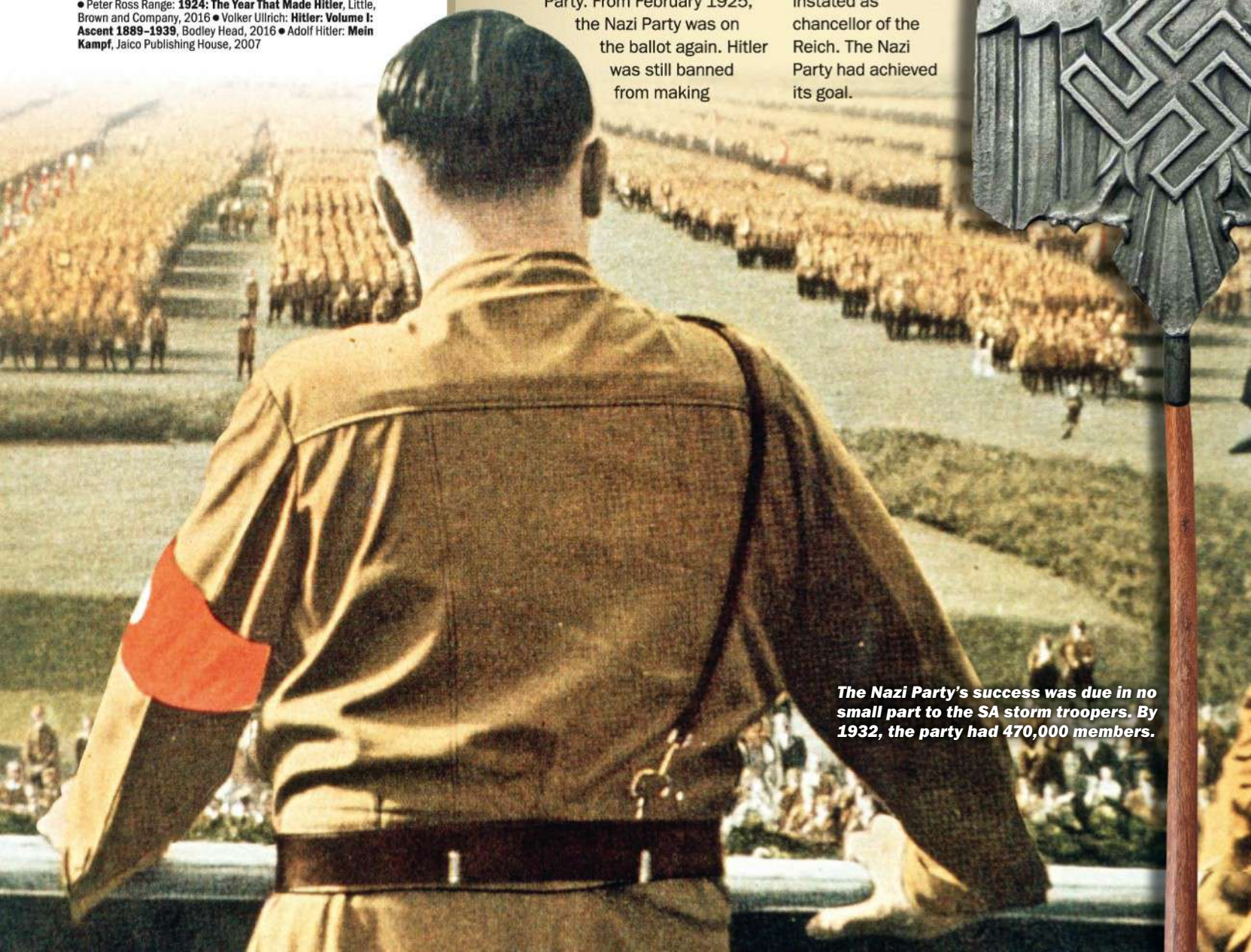
The failed coup attempt in 1923 convinced Adolf Hitler that he could not seize power in Germany by force. Instead, the country had to be conquered using the parliamentary process. Shortly after his release, the Nazi leader solemnly promised the Bavarian prime minister, Heinrich Held, that he would refrain from attempting another coup, a promise that Held believed: "The beast is tamed, now we can loosen the shackles," stated the prime minister, lifting the ban on the Nazi Party. From February 1925, the Nazi Party was on the ballot again. Hitler was still banned from making

speeches in large parts of Germany, but he attended private gatherings.

The politically motivated assaults committed by the party's SA storm troopers did not cease, either, but Hitler managed to stay within the bounds of what the police and politicians would accept.

After the 1932 election, the Nazi Party was Germany's largest political party, and on 30th January, 1933, Hitler was democratically instated as chancellor of the Reich. The Nazi Party had achieved its goal.

**The Nazi Party's success was due in no small part to the SA storm troopers. By 1932, the party had 470,000 members.**







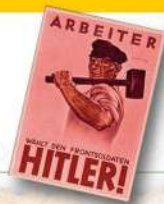




# A VISION DEVELOPS

Adolf Hitler left the Landsberg prison in southern Bavaria as a new man. He had spent his nine months behind bars drafting visions for a future Nazi empire headed by himself. Even disastrous elections, public speaking bans and temporary bans against the SA and the SS could no longer stop the ambitious Nazi leader. Over the next nine years, Hitler won the favour of the German people through a combination of political ingenuity, street violence and favourable circumstances.





## 1924-33

**1924** After nine months, Hitler leaves prison as a free man.

**1925** Paul von Hindenburg is elected President.

**1929** The stock exchange in Wall Street, NY, collapses.

**1932** The militant SA and SS organisations are banned by Hindenburg.

**1932** The Nazis have their best election so far. It is now Germany's largest party with 37 per cent of all votes.

**1933** Adolf Hitler is appointed Germany's Chancellor.

1924 >>> 1925 >>> 1929 >>> 1932 >>> 1933 >>>

Adolf Hitler had plenty of time for reflection in 1924. After the failed putsch in 1923, he had been incarcerated in the Landsberg prison in southern Bavaria. Although the National Socialist leader was, in reality, a convict, he did not suffer any distress in the old fort. From his cell, he looked down at the River Lech, which softly wound its way through the South German countryside. Hitler's defence speeches and National Socialist tirades at the trial had impressed the prison guards, who treated Hitler as a guest of honour and let his friends and fellow party members visit with gifts to make life easier for their imprisoned leader.

Hitler later explained that his vision about becoming the Führer of Germany gathered momentum in the prison. During hour-long sessions, he dictated his ideas about Germany, Nazism and himself to his loyal assistant, the student Rudolf Hess, who wrote down every word. Hitler told Hess about his visions for the future Nazi Germany. In history, there had been two German empires: The Holy Roman Empire, which collapsed in the 1800s, and the empire that Bismarck had gathered at the end of the 19th century. Hitler wanted to create the Third Reich – a large German state populated by Aryans and with Hitler as the Führer.

#### FRIENDS HELPED HITLER GET OUT

Hitler's time in prison was surprisingly short in spite of his five-year sentence. Hitler had friends in high places who worked intensively to

have him pardoned – and they succeeded. On 20 December 1924, after only nine months, 35-year-old Adolf Hitler walked out of the prison as a free man.

If Hitler had expected a procession in his honour, he would have been disappointed. Germany had changed considerably since the failed Nazi putsch in 1923. Millions of dollars had begun to flow into the country from the USA in the form of inexpensive loans. At the same time, France had

loosened its grip around the industrial areas in the Ruhr district. The large-scale financial crisis had been replaced by hope, and the Germans were enjoying the new post-crisis era. Families had enough to eat and in the cities, cultural life was flourishing. The Nazi Party, on the other hand, was in dire

straits. The Interior Minister of Bavaria had banned the party from running in the Land election and had also banned Hitler from speaking at public meetings. At the election in December 1924, the Nazis saw their number of votes halved to just under a million, and the leaders seriously considered giving up and disbanding the Party.

At this – for the Nazi Party – critical moment, Hitler withdrew to a one-bedroom flat at the top floor of Thiersch Strasse 41 in Munich. Here, he finished dictating the first part of his book "Mein Kampf" and devised a plan to rebuild the Party. In prison, Hitler had decided that he was done with military coups. Now, he wanted to assume power by lawful means, using the weapons of his political opponents on themselves.

#### NEWSPAPER STRENGTHENS PARTY

On 16 February 1925, the Nazi Party and its press were once again made legal, and 11 days later, Adolf Hitler spoke at a mass

*Hitler speaks to a group of businessmen. This meeting is one of the first ones after the cancellation of the ban to speak.*

meeting for the first time since the Beer Hall Putsch. After Hitler's two-hour speech, the 4,000 attendants broke out into a thunderous roar. Their joy was short-lived, however, as Hitler's aggressive rhetoric instantly led to a new public speaking ban – this time for two

#### 264 days

was Hitler incarcerated in the Landsberg prison before being pardoned for good conduct.



PAUL VON HINDENBURG 1847-1934

### THE PEOPLE'S FATHER

■ Paul Ludwig Hans Anton von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg belonged to an old aristocratic family from East Prussia. Having completed his naval cadet training in Berlin, he showed his courage and military talent in the wars against Austria (1866) and France (1871). Hindenburg retired as a highly-decorated general in 1911, but rejoined the army in World War I, where he stopped the Russian advance from the east. The general

gained hero status and was appointed commander-in-chief. In 1925, Hindenburg became the second President of the new Germany. Seven years later, the popular general beat the impetuous Hitler in the presidential election. The year after, against his will, he appointed Hitler Chancellor, hoping that the Nazi leader could ensure political peace. Hindenburg died of lung cancer in his home in East Prussia in 1934.

German war hero – commander-in-chief in World War I – President in the Weimar Republic





years. Temporarily subdued, Hitler began to focus his efforts on building the Nazi Party from within. Hitler wanted to organise the Party with a clear leader – himself – and thousands of small branches. The Nazi Party was to grow from Bavaria and be set up all over Germany.

The young prodigy, Gregor Strasser, was given the task of organising the Party in and around Berlin, areas notorious for being socialist and communist strongholds. Strasser founded the newspaper *Berliner Arbeiterzeitung* and hired the 28-year-old fanatic nationalist, Joseph Paul Goebbels, as the secretary of the newsletter. This turned out to be a choice that the Nazis would never regret. With a university degree, an unusually mordant writing style and an ability to seduce the masses, Goebbels would be worth his weight in gold.

This pattern was repeated all over the country. The purchase of newspapers,

strong propaganda and grandiose rhetoric attracted mainly young people and veterans from World War I to the Party. At the end of 1925, the Nazis had 27,000 paying members. In 1926, this number had almost doubled to 49,000, and in 1927, once again doubled to 108,000.

#### FIGHT CORPS REORGANISED

While rebuilding a seemingly normal political party, Hitler also reorganised the SA. In the early 1920s, the Brownshirts had mostly been used as street fighters for Hitler. Now, they were organised with military discipline into an armed group that was to protect the Nazi meetings, and – just as important – harass and terrorise political opponents.

Hardened and brutal war veterans and restless youth flocked to the SA, lured by the sense of community, the uniforms and the possibility to engage in fist fights with the Communists' street corps. In small

## THE NAZI BIBLE WAS WRITTEN IN PRISON

During his stay in the Landsberg prison, Hitler started to put his vision about a future Nazi Germany into words. "Mein Kampf" would become the Bible of National Socialism, although the sales figures were modest until the seizure of power in 1934. From 1936, all newly-wed Germans were given a copy as a wedding present, and soldiers on the front always brought a copy. When the Third Reich collapsed in 1945, more than 10m Germans had a copy.



From his prison cell in Landsberg, Hitler dictated Nazi visions to his secretary

**"Life never forgives weakness"**

*...about the need for a strong leader*

**"The dark-haired Jewish boy lies in wait for the innocent German girl and poisons her with his blood"**

*...about racial purity*



"Mein Kampf" was published in July 1925, paid by the Party.

groups and armed with clubs, the storm troops instigated war in the German streets in an attempt to make people long for a strong man who could bring peace. The most promising, strong and loyal ones were picked out to form the backbone of the newly-established Schutz-staffel – Hitler's personal security guard. The elite of the Nazi bodyguards were known as the SS. ►





In May 1928, the Nazis suffered yet another disastrous election. Only 800,000 voters voted for the Party headed by the Austrian corporal. Hitler and the Berlin leaders, Strasser and Goebbels, continued steadily and developed the Party to make it strong enough to seize power once the times were more favourable.

#### GERMANY COLLAPSES

The turning point came before they had even expected themselves. In October 1929, the free and carefree times came to a sudden end. The American stock exchange on Wall Street collapsed, and Germany was one of the first victims. The loans from the USA stopped, and before long, production was halved. Thousands of Germans were laid off and joined the rapidly growing queues of unemployed people.

The situation soon developed from bad to desperate. The year after, millions of people were left without a job, and young Germans in particular were hoping for a future without depression and

unemployment. Every day, the queues to the soup kitchens grew longer. Although the Germans were starving, Hitler could not contain his enthusiasm. He wrote the

"Every day, the queues to the soup kitchens grew longer. While the Germans were starving, Hitler was enthusiastic"

following in one of the Nazi Party's newspapers: "Never in my life have I been so happy. The harsh realities have opened the eyes of millions of Germans to the swindle, lies and deceit by the Marxist impostors".

During the 1930 election campaign, he told the disillusioned voters that he would create a powerful Germany. The debt to the USA was not to be repaid, Hitler promised, and he strongly rejected the humiliating Treaty of Versailles from 1919. Hitler would crush corruption and put the wealthy capitalists in their place – especially the greedy Jewish ones. He lured the

nationalist voters with promises of rebuilding the country's proud army and demand a return of the areas that were lost after World War I. Unemployed people were promised work and food, and the middle class fell for the bombast against the unrest and violence in the republic – ironically, Hitler's own SA was responsible for most of the violence in the streets. The hateful rhetoric about Jews and socialists sent shivers down the spines of most Germans, but many liked the vision of a powerful Germany. The old feelings of patriotism and nationalism returned after having been dormant during the first ten years of the republic.

The Germans were attracted by Hitler's rhetoric, and the election result on 14 September 1930 was overwhelming: The National Socialists won a total of 6,409,600 votes and thus 107 seats in the Reichstag. Together with the greater influence, the election result had an unexpected effect. The Nazis' success convinced not only millions of people from the German middle class that Hitler was Germany's salvation; now, businessmen, the upper class, Prussian nobility and military men were eager to join

*Marching SA troops cheer at Hitler in 1927. The Brown-shirts were to create insecurity in the streets and suppress political opponents.*







The 107 popularly elected Nazi members at the opening of the Reichstag in October 1930. More than six million Germans voted for the Party, which gained 18 per cent of all votes.

the Nazi Party. Everybody looked to the strong man who vowed to rebuild the German empire. With his newly-won power, Hitler concentrated on the powerful groups that he could use in the future: The army and the large German industrialists.

In the last half of 1931, he therefore criss-crossed Germany to secretly meet prominent businessmen who could finance future

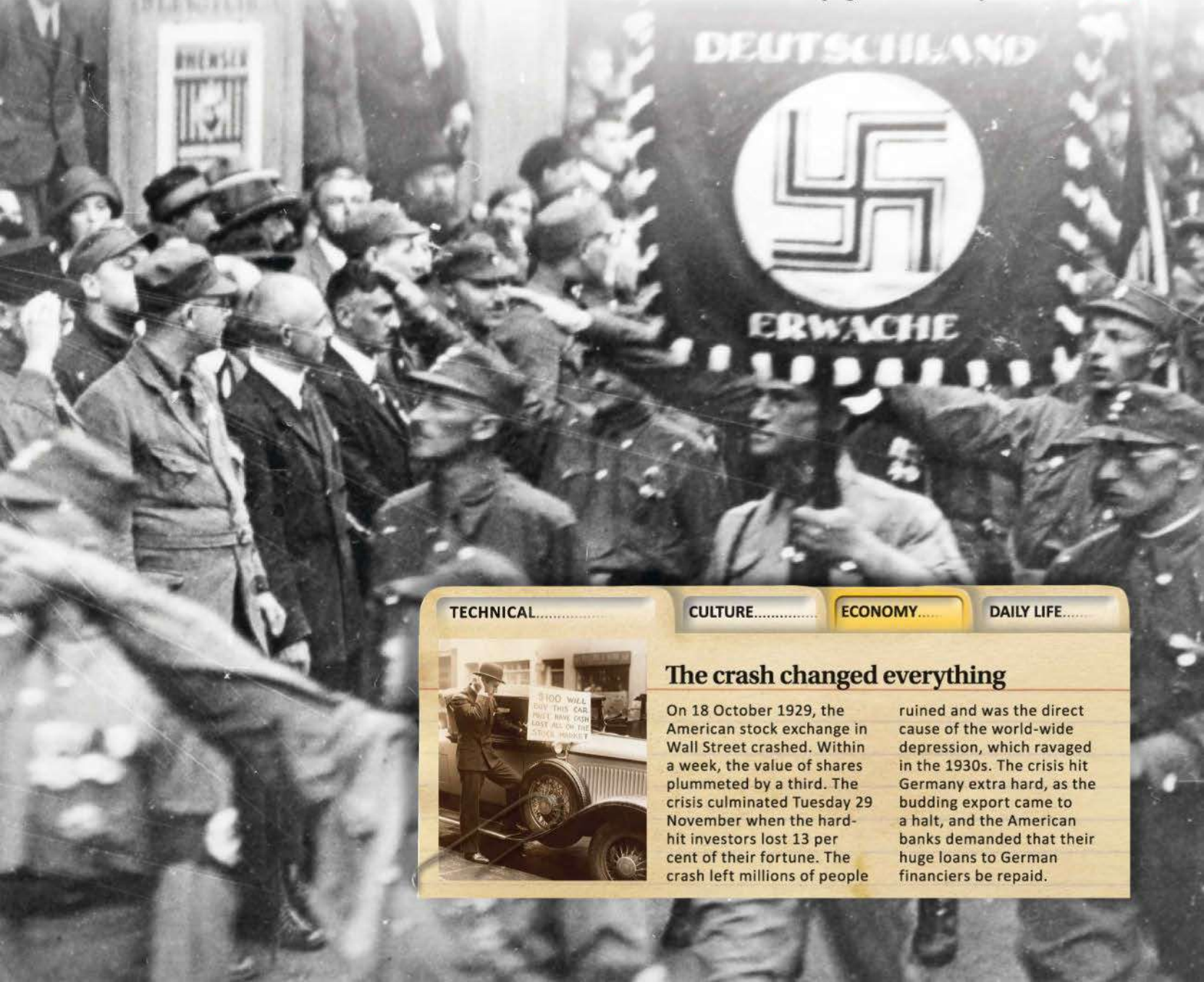


elections, new propaganda campaigns and not least pay for uniforms and flags to the hundreds of thousands of men who were now serving in the SA and SS.

#### HITLER BECOMES GERMAN

In January 1932, the Nazi Interior Minister in the Land of Braunschweig appointed Adolf Hitler attaché – and thus a German

citizen. Citizenship was vital to Hitler, who was Austrian, as only Germans were allowed to run for president in the election later that year. Although the current President, Paul von Hindenburg, was very popular among the Germans, Hitler decided to challenge him. In a veritable working frenzy, he launched the Party into an intense election campaign orchestrated by Goebbels and ▶



#### TECHNICAL



#### CULTURE

#### ECONOMY

#### DAILY LIFE

### The crash changed everything

On 18 October 1929, the American stock exchange in Wall Street crashed. Within a week, the value of shares plummeted by a third. The crisis culminated Tuesday 29 November when the hard-hit investors lost 13 per cent of their fortune. The crash left millions of people

ruined and was the direct cause of the world-wide depression, which ravaged in the 1930s. The crisis hit Germany extra hard, as the budding export came to a halt, and the American banks demanded that their huge loans to German financiers be repaid.





Strasser and with a vigour that had never been seen before in Germany. The German towns and cities were plastered with more than a million colourful posters, and local Party supporters went on the streets and handed out pamphlets. The party's printing office worked hard to spew out the more than 12 million extra newspapers during the election months. At the same time, Hitler made use of modern technology. Under the ambiguous slogan "Hitler over Germany" he flew from city to city in a rented plane and spoke at mass meetings in 20 cities in only six days. More than one million people attended the election meetings.

Throughout the election campaign, Brownshirts had ravaged in the streets, and on election day, 10 April, SA leader Ernst Röhm ordered 400,000 Brownshirts on the streets in and around Berlin. The German army feared a coup attempt, and there were rumours about civil war. Despite the Nazis' threats, street violence and the streamlined election campaign, Hindenburg regained the presidency. Hitler came second. 13.5 million Germans voted for the Nazi Party leader.

#### HINDENBURG IS "A FOOL"

Immediately after his re-election, Hindenburg banned the two paramilitary Nazi corps, the SA and SS, but also invited Hitler to a conversation in his residence. The strong dislike between the two was apparent, and while Hitler often referred to the president as "an old fool", Hindenburg spoke with contempt about Hitler as "the Bohemian corporal". At the meeting, Hitler guaranteed that peace would return to the streets provided that Hindenburg lifted the ban against the SA and the SS.

What was even more important to the Nazi leader was for the President to dissolve the Reichstag and call a general election. With more brute force from the storm troopers and an efficient election campaign, the Nazis would gain a majority in the Reichstag and force Hindenburg to install Hitler as Chancellor. The euphoria over an impending seizure of power reached to the Nazi top. Goebbels wrote in his diary:

"Hitler's conversation with the President went well... The Reichstag has been dissolved. There will be an election! Election! We are all very happy".

The fierce fights between the SA and the Communists' semi-military corps in particular now exploded in the German cities. In Prussia, at least 82 young men were beaten to death in street fights in June. The SA also terrorised businessmen, professors, teachers and civil servants who protested against the Nazi policy.



1932: Hitler had his eyes set on the presidency. A rented plane allowed him to speak in hundreds of cities during the campaign.

Hitler's statements about restoring calm in the republic reached gigantic crowds. On 27 July 1932 – four days before the election – Hitler spoke to 60,000 people in Brandenburg and to almost as many in Potsdam, and more than 120,000 fanatical supporters greeted him with cheers at the huge Grunewald Stadium in Berlin.

The election campaign was a success. The Nazis won 230 seats in the Reichstag and became the largest party in Germany. In just four years, Hitler had won more than 13 million Germans over on

his side. Still, the ageing Hindenburg declined to appoint the aggressive Nazi leader Chancellor of his government. He chose the leader of Zentrum, the German centre party, Franz von Papen.

"who endangered the future of the Republic". Hindenburg declined, and Schleicher stepped down as Chancellor in January 1933.

**The President** was the supreme leader of the army and, in times of crisis, could pass laws, bypassing the Reichstag.

Fear about the future and total breakdown hung heavy over the Republic on 29 January, when 10,000 workers gathered in the centre of Berlin to demonstrate against Hitler, who was staying in his room at the fashionable Kaiserhof Hotel in Berlin.

On 29 January in the afternoon, he and Goebbels had been told by an enthusiastic Göring that there was a rumour that Hitler would be appointed Chancellor.

Hitler waited for 24 hours and was then summoned to the Reich Chancellery, where Hindenburg was waiting. In the darkest hour of the Republic, the old President looked to the man he thought could bring together the political parties and the only one who would control the frightening SA army. It had been 14 years since Hitler enrolled in the Nazi Party, and with the President's demand for full collaboration for the country's well-being, Adolf Hitler was sworn in as new Reich Chancellor on 30 January 1933. ■

## Adolf - Hitler - Str.

Shortly after the seizure of power, a large number of streets and squares all over Germany were renamed and given the name of the new Chancellor.

#### HITLER BECOMES CHANCELLOR

Without the Nazis' cooperation, von Papen was unable to get his bills passed. Instead, he called yet another general election, this

#### CHANCELLOR RESIGNED

On 17 November 1932, Franz von Papen gave in. The former lieutenant-colonel had headed a minority government for four months and, increasingly frustrated, seen his attempt to govern be blocked by Social Democrats, Communists and Hitler's Nazi Party. Von Papen therefore

reluctantly left the chancellorship to his Defence Minister, Kurt von Schleicher, with whom he fell out right away. The hatred between the two former colleagues grew, and von Papen became a fierce advocate for Adolf Hitler as a new head of government in Germany – which became a reality in February 1933.

#### DECISIVE MOMENTS







**Deutsche Reichspost**

Kantling 136 10 10 1930

VOM TRANSPORT

Ich reichkanzler Hitler  
Berlin

Empfänger  
Lager

Bei  
Befehl  
nach

Stellen Glückwünsche weil stützpunkt namting =  
erleben +

NÄCHSTEN GLÜCKWUNSCH = IHR FÜRERER  
GEFÄHRLICHKEIT MEISTER LUKKER +

Gottes reichsten segnen dir zu heile Deutschlands =  
dr friedrich weber .+

die Stadt Neustadt an der Aisch entbietet Ihnen  
ehrenbürger zur ehrenvollen ernennung als reichsanwalt  
ein künftiges bürger - stadtrat neustadt an der Aisch

die Stadt Coburg wünscht Ihnen ehrenbürger und fuhrer  
deutschlands zur übernahme des kanzleramtes des  
deutschen reiches weil und sind - der stadtrat Schwede +

Congratulatory messages poured in to Germany's new Chancellor. Here, from the city of Neustadt.

“On 30 January 1933, Hitler was sworn in as Germany’s new Chancellor”





**THE DREAM OF THE  
1,000-YEAR REICH**

# THE WORLD IS SEDUCED

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A flock of white pigeons was released into the sky when Hitler welcomed the Olympics to Berlin in 1936.

The games was one of Nazism's biggest PR stunts, showing the Third Reich in its best light. But behind the façade, freedoms were being curtailed. Hitler's dream included the extermination of both political opponents and the Jews.

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# ALBE

## GERMANY/1933



The newly empowered Nazis prepare to restore the might of Germany and break the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The army must be rebuilt, the Reich expanded, and splendid monuments erected.



# RT SPEER

## built Hitler's dreams

*In 1933, Germany's new Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, takes the young architect Albert Speer under his wing. The two men are on the same wavelength, and soon Speer is realising Hitler's dream of the thousand-year Reich – with gigantic buildings of marble and granite.*



*Albert Speer often met privately with Hitler to discuss his building plans.*

SZ PHOTO/ALAMY/IMAGE SELECT





BY ELSE CHRISTENSEN

Senior Nazi Party figures stood together in Adolf Hitler's apartment when he entered accompanied by young architect Albert Speer in the summer of 1933. At this point, Speer remained largely unknown, although he had been tasked with modernising the Reich Chancellery, the German chancellor's official residence.

A few minutes earlier, the architect had been invited inside by Hitler, who was inspecting the building work – as was his habit. The invitation was unexpected – for Speer did not know his famous employer personally.

To the chagrin of the other guests, the two men lost themselves in a conversation about Hitler's great passion: architecture. Several years later, Hitler told Speer why

he invited him – a young, insignificant architect – into his circle.

"You attracted my notice during our rounds. I was looking for an architect to whom I could entrust my building plans. I wanted someone young; for as you know these plans extend far into the future," Hitler explained.

Hitler's wish was to create a Germany whose architecture would compete with the most beautiful in Vienna, Paris and Rome. Buildings that, even if the German Reich collapsed, would remain as impressive ruins. It would transpire that Speer was the perfect man to bring Hitler's craziest dreams to life.

### Architect seduced by Hitler's speech

More than two years earlier, on 4th December 1930, Speer had encountered

Hitler for the first time – during a speech in Berlin's Neukölln district. Like the rest of Germany, the country's capital was plagued by poverty, unemployment and regular street battles between communists and Nazis.

On that December day, rumours spread that two members of the Nazi stormtroopers, the SA 'brownshirts', had been killed by communists. But instead of calling for revenge, the Nazi Party leader had appealed for moderation and compromise, invoking traditional German virtues like honour and heroism. The cause of all evils – Hitler claimed from his rostrum – was that World War I had taken the lives of Germany's best. In their place, the country was governed by mediocrities who were now running Germany down.

## Father determined Speer's career

**No one can make a living from mathematics, Albert Speer Senior said when forbidding his son to pursue his dream. Instead, the young Albert was told to study architecture.**

The Speer family home was not a loving one. Albert Speer, born into a wealthy German family in 1905, was the middle child of three and often overlooked, though none of the boys were spoiled. Children should be seen and not heard, according to their conservative parents.

Money wasn't in short supply. His father, Albert Friedrich Speer, was a renowned architect who built houses in the simple neo-classicist style of the

time. His career provided enough money for the family to live in a grand, 14-room apartment, own two Mercedes cars and retain a staff of six servants – in addition to a driver.

In 1918, the family moved to their summer home, a mansion-like house in Heidelberg. The family's carefree days, however, ended after the country's defeat in WWI; their earnings eroded through the hyperinflation caused by Germany's huge war reparations. When

Albert told his father that he wanted to study maths, his father argued against the decision – he would not earn enough to maintain his position.

Albert was persuaded instead to study architecture, but the economic crisis meant he originally had to enrol at the unremarkable Institute of Technology in Karlsruhe. Only after the German economy stabilised in the mid-1920s was Speer able to switch to better colleges: first in Munich and later in Berlin, where he graduated aged 22.



### Speer had a difficult start

**1905:** Born on 19th March in the city of Mannheim in south-western Germany.

**1923:** Begins his architectural studies at the Technische Hochschule (Institute of Technology) in Karlsruhe.

**1924:** Continues study at the Technische Hochschule in the Bavarian city of Munich.

**1925:** Moves to the Technische Universität in Berlin. Speer wants to study with the leading architect, Hans Poelzig, but his drawing ability is insufficient to get him into Poelzig's class.

**1927:** Graduates as an architect.

**1927:** Admitted as assistant to Professor Heinrich Tessenow, one of the most prominent architects of the time. Speer holds the position until 1932, when he quits during the depression.

**1932:** Property manager in his father's company in Heidelberg. He performs small commissions for the party branch in Berlin and other Nazi organisations before breaking through as Hitler's architect the following year.

Albert Speer

Albert's mother, Luise Máthilde Wilhelmine, favoured her eldest son, Hermann.

Hermann Speer



The Nazi Party's job was to secure power for a new elite determined to restore Germany's greatness.

Hitler addressed his speech specifically to the students making up the majority of the 5,000-strong audience; they should "find a way to integrate themselves into the nation's life and future".

The speech was received with enthusiasm. The middle-class youth had grown up with high expectations, but the current crisis meant they could only look forward to unemployment. The Nazi leader's optimism was exactly what they needed. The same was true for Speer. The newly graduated architect was currently employed in a poorly paid, dead-end position as an assistant to a university professor.

Hitler came across as more subdued than Speer had expected. He knew the Nazi leader only from posters and newspaper cartoons – "I had seen him in military tunic, with shoulder straps, swastika armband, and hair flapping over his forehead" – but to the young architect's surprise, Hitler appeared in a "well-fitted blue suit".

The Nazi leader looked "markedly respectable" and "bore out the note of reasonable modesty", while his "irony was softened by a somewhat self-conscious humour; his South German charm reminded me agreeably of my native region", Speer later recalled.

### New job opportunities opened up

After the speech, the architect drove out to a nearby forest where he pondered Hitler's message. When Speer returned home, he was – he later wrote – "a changed person".

"Here, it seemed to me, was hope. Here were new ideals, a new understanding, new tasks," he recalled in his memoirs. On 1st March 1931, Speer joined the Nazi Party. His member number was 473,481.

While he hunted for new commissions, the young architect found himself hanging out at the party's local offices. Here he met unemployed teacher Karl Hanke, who ran the party's West Berlin organisation. Through Hanke, Speer was able to receive small tasks such as redecorating Hanke's own house and then, later, the job of renovating the party's new city headquarters.

The Nazi headquarters was part of Berlin's prestigious government district, an expensive address that the party couldn't afford. However, Hitler and his

**"He reminded me agreeably of my native region".**

Albert Speer, 1930

supporters believed the Nazis were close to gaining power in Germany and wanted a suitable building in the right area.

Their prediction came true: on 30th January 1933, Hitler occupied the Chancellor's office. A few weeks later, Hanke summoned Speer – this time to task him with overseeing the refurbishment of the Prince Leopold mansion on Wilhelmsplatz, which would later house Goebbels' propaganda ministry. While working there, Speer spent time in the ministry, now presided over by Hanke, who was by then Goebbels' secretary. It was here the architect accidentally stumbled on the sketch for a night rally scheduled for 1st May.

May Day had previously been one of celebration for socialists, communists and the trade unions, but that would change under Hitler.

In future, 1st May was to be a day for celebrating national socialism: *Tag Arbeit National Arbeit* (Day of National Work). The event was to be celebrated with a huge night gathering at the open-air Tempelhof Field in Berlin, but Speer wasn't impressed by the plans Hanke's office had drawn up: "Those look

like decorations for a rifle club meet," he told Hanke.

"If you can do better, go to it," Hanke replied. Speer took on the challenge and spent the evening sat at his drawing board.

### Movie effects inspired Speer

Time was short, so the grandstand had to be both simple to build and quick to set up.

Speer took inspiration from the film world's use of scenery. His proposal to Hanke was as simple and as effective as a film set: the grandstand would be flanked by nine 33-metre-high flagpoles fitted with elongated swastika banners. Powerful floodlights borrowed from the UFA studios, Germany's leading film



**At the 1937 World Exhibition in Paris, the German pavilion was located opposite the Soviet one. Speer built a tall, dismissive colossus in response to the provocative Soviet monument.**



INTERFOTO/IMAGE SELECT & SHUTTERSTOCK



**The T-square was one of Speer's most important tools when producing his building designs.**







company, would be placed at the edge of the square, from where they pointed straight up into the sky to form columns of light, while smaller flags stood between the floodlights, allowing the beams to catch them fluttering.

Hitler was thrilled with the proposal, but remained ignorant as to Speer's prominent role in the event, as Goebbels managed to take most of the credit.

However, on 1st May, Speer secured the job of renovating the Reich Chancellery. The Führer often inspected the ongoing work himself, and it was on a July day that he drew Speer into his orbit when he invited him to lunch in the company of his close circle.

### Speer became a firefighter

During lunch, Hitler spoke of his own youth and his time as a misunderstood artist in Vienna. He had drifted around the Austro-Hungarian Empire's capital, admiring its grandiose edifices while living himself in squalid rented rooms. "But in my imagination I lived in palaces," Hitler said.

Now that Hitler was in power, the young Speer was the man to make his dreams become reality.

"After years of frustrated efforts I was wild to accomplish things," the architect said later about his early, heady days as part of the Führer's inner circle.

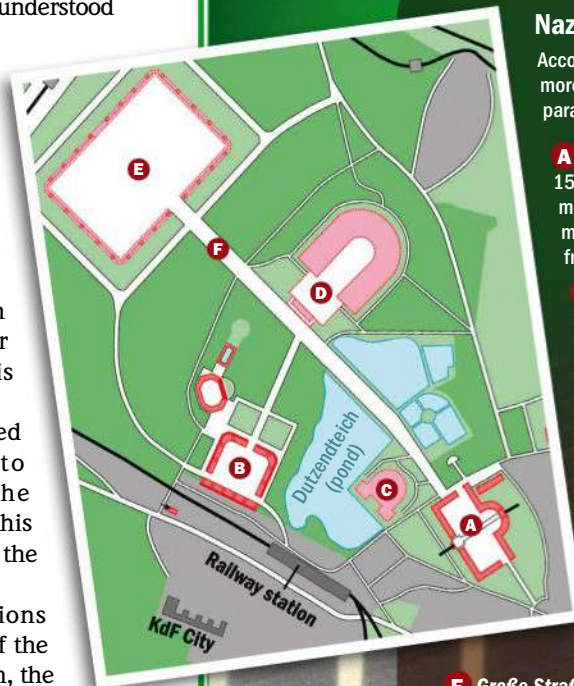
A stream of commissions followed: the renovation of the German embassy in London, the construction of the Nazi Party's *Zeppelinfeld* (Zeppelin Field) parade ground in Nuremberg, and the rebuilding of many existing industrial buildings. At the same time, Speer served as a firefighter when other architects' work didn't meet Hitler's tastes.

In the summer of 1934, for example, Speer was forced to almost immediately revise plans for a new stadium in Berlin, which was to be completed for the Olympic Games two years later. The architect, Werner March, had designed a building of steel, glass and concrete, but it was far too modern for Hitler's taste. The Führer was reportedly so agitated he threatened to cancel the Olympics.

Speer removed the glass from March's drawings and lined the concrete surfaces with limestone, giving the building a ▶

# Speer designed Nuremberg parade ground

Every year in September, the Nazis celebrated with a week-long rally in Nuremberg. In 1934, 700,000 Nazis and German soldiers marched to the German city to attend the 6th Party Congress with parades and glowing speeches. Speer's most notable masterpiece was his 'cathedral of light'.



### Nazi plans for the party rally grounds

According to Hitler, the Nazi Party parade in Nuremberg required a more impressive backdrop. He tasked Speer to design a bigger parade ground as well as a gigantic stadium for future Olympics.

**A Luitpold Arena:** the original parade ground had seating for 150,000 participants. In front of the square was a stand 150 metres long. In addition, the area housed the Luitpold Hall meeting room and a memorial hall to commemorate the dead from Hitler's failed coup in 1923.

**B Zeppelin Field:** Speer's first building was completed in 1937. The grandstand was 360 metres wide and adorned with a row of columns – inspired by a Greek temple.

**C Congress Hall:** a meeting centre for 50,000 people (not completed). In 2001, the building was transformed into the Documentation Centre Nazi Party Rally Grounds.

**D Deutsches Stadium:** a horseshoe-shaped stadium based on the Greek model. It would seat 400,000 spectators and host every Olympic Games after 1944. Only the foundations were laid; today the place is a lake.

**E März Field:** the parade ground for the German armed forces. The dimensions were huge: 955 x 610 metres. Here, soldiers would be able to fight smaller battles. The facility was never finished.

**F Große Straße (Great Road):** the 40-meter-wide connecting road was paved with 1.2-m<sup>2</sup> granite pavers. 1.2 m equals two steps in the goose-step.



The 'pillars' for Speer's 'cathedral of light' were provided by Luftwaffe search lights that stretched several kilometres into the night sky.

AKG-IMAGES/SCANPIX



## 1 Hitler descended from the sky

Every September, Nuremberg was the destination for the Party Congress. In 1934, Hitler arrived by plane on **4th September** and drove in an open carriage to the Hotel Deutscher Hof. Along the route stood cheering citizens, who later took part in a torchlight procession. Hitler was called out on to the hotel balcony with the cry, "We want our Führer!"



The Führer arrived aboard a Junkers Ju 52 aircraft.

PRINT COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES



Members of the Hitler Youth were aged 14-18. The organisation's aim was to prepare them for war.

ULSTEIN BILD/CONTRIBUTOR/GETTY IMAGES

## 3 The youth lined up

60,000 boys were quartered in well-stocked tent camps positioned around the parade grounds. On **Hitler Youth Day** (8th September), they lined up at the parade ground to demonstrate their skills and hear Hitler speak. The youth needed to be prepared to make great sacrifices for the Fatherland, the Führer solemnly proclaimed.

## 5 Tribute to fallen soldiers

On the penultimate day of the congress, Hitler, SS leader Heinrich Himmler and new SA leader Viktor Lutze walked across the parade ground to **lay a wreath** for those who fell in World War I.



Around 1.8 million German soldiers died in combat during World War I.

IMAGNO/GETTY IMAGES

## 2 Each day had its own theme

The official opening took place the following day. In Luitpold Hall, 16,000 invited guests heard **Hitler's opening speech**. The schedule was fixed, with each Nazi organisation performing its own marches and parades.

## 4 Sacred banner was brought forward

The Beer Hall Putsch in 1923 cost 16 Nazis their lives. Their blood soaked a swastika flag, the **Blutfahne (Blood Flag)**, was proudly displayed in the Luitpold Arena.



52,000 young men from the Reich Labour Service line up for a parade with their spades.

IMAGNO/GETTY IMAGES

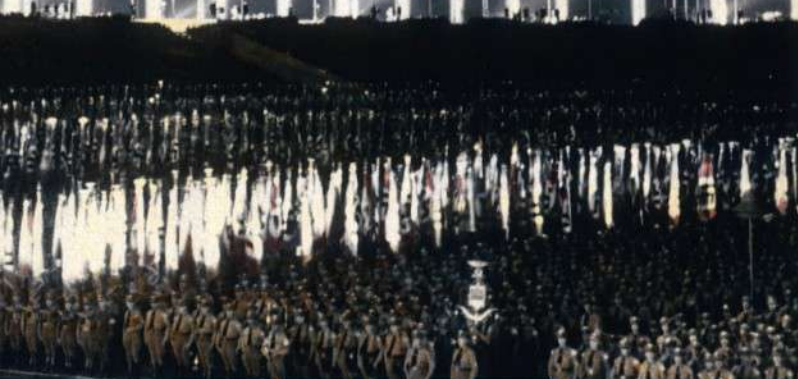
## 6 The Führer ushered in his millennial

On the final day - 10th September - Hitler gave his closing speech to the throng, stating:

***"It is our wish and will that this State and Reich will endure for millennia to come."***

## 7 Light show rounded off celebrations in style

The 1934 party congress was concluded on the evening of 10th September with Speer's **cathedral of light**. 152 floodlights sent columns of light up into the night. You can watch a film about the 1934 party congress - *The Triumph of the Will* - at [www.dailymotion.com/video/x6uaJey](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6uaJey)







more monumental appearance. Satisfied, Hitler approved the new draft.

### Hitler planned world's largest city

One day in the spring of 1936, Hitler announced to his architect that his next assignment would be "the greatest of all".

Shortly after, the Führer revealed what his cryptic comment meant. Speer's job was to transform Berlin, which failed to live up to Hitler's notions of what a capital city should be. "Berlin is a big city, but not a real metropolis," he told the young architect. "Look at Paris, the most beautiful city in the world. Or even Vienna. Those are cities with grand style. Berlin is nothing but an unregulated accumulation of buildings."

On 30th January 1937, four years after the Nazis had seized power, Hitler officially commissioned Speer, who was appointed Inspector General of Building for the Reich Capital. The title came with the rank of undersecretary of state in the Reich government, and was so powerful that Speer enjoyed almost

dictatorial powers – answering only to Hitler himself.

"From now on you make the plans. Take this drawing along. When you have something ready, show it to me. As you know, I always have time for such things," Hitler assured him.

In close collaboration with Hitler, Speer drew up plans for the new Berlin – now called *Welthauptstadt Germania*, the World Capital Germania.

The construction plans were even more grandiose than its name. A huge boulevard would extend north from a brand-new mainline train station, the *Südbahnhof* (South Station). The five-kilometre boulevard would lead through another brand-new neighbourhood housing ministries and large German companies mixed with theatres, department stores and a triumphal arch that honoured the fallen in World War I.

At the end of the boulevard, the mighty *Volkshalle* (People's Hall) was a gigantic domed building capable of housing no fewer than 180,000 people,

its interior adorned with marble columns and gold mosaics.

The design of both the triumphal arch and domed hall were based on drafts that Hitler had drawn 12 years before, while he still harboured dreams of becoming a great architect himself.

### Building to intimidate guests

At the heart of Germania, Hitler decided he needed a new permanent palace to rule the country from. Speer and his workforce started work in January 1938 and laboured hard to ensure the New Reich Chancellery would be ready for Hitler's reception of foreign ambassadors the following year.

"I am too proud to move into former palaces," he said in a speech marking the ridgepole raising of the new chancellery in August 1938. "That I refuse to do. The new Reich will create new spaces for itself and its own buildings. I will not move into the old palaces."

The Chancellery included Hitler's study and offices for the state administration, ►



Albert Speer designed his own house near Hitler's personal retreat in the Alps.

## If Hitler had a friend...

... then it was Albert Speer. Normally, the Führer avoided close ties to his staff, but the architect was an exception.

During the Nuremberg trials after World War II, Albert Speer confided to his interrogators that "if Hitler had any friends at all, I certainly would have been one of his close friends".

The Führer was known for his reluctance to forge close personal ties with employees and political allies. However, Hitler made an exception with his favourite architect, and Speer quickly gained a special place within the Führer's inner circle.

Not only did Speer attend almost all of Hitler's social events, but he also had almost unlimited access to the busy dictator. Together they spent many evenings discussing architecture.

The friendship gave rise to envy among other members of the Führer's inner circle. In particular, Hitler's closest associate, party secretary Martin Bormann, despised the architect. He regarded Speer as a rival for Hitler's favour and confidence. Joseph Goebbels, Hermann Göring and other top Nazis were also uneasy. They feared that Hitler would appoint Albert Speer as his successor, but this never happened.



*"I am too proud to move into former palaces. That I refuse to do. The new Reich will create new spaces for itself and its own buildings."*

Adolf Hitler, marking the raising of the New Reich Chancellery's ridgepole, 1938

Hitler's study was designed to intimidate and impress visiting diplomats – it wasn't used for work. Hitler couldn't even reach the phone from his chair.





An artificial lake would reflect the giant dome to make it appear twice as large.

# Adolf Hitler's vision for Germania

**Long before Hitler became German Chancellor, he dreamed of erecting gargantuan buildings – a triumphal arch and a dome. In 1937, he handed his sketches to Speer, who began designing an entire city around the two buildings. Hitler wanted a world capital, Germania, to surpass Paris, Rome and Vienna.**

MIKKEL JUUL JENSEN/HISTORIE MAGAZINE

Car traffic was to be redirected under Germania via an underground motorway.

## Hitler planned to live in a palace

**Führerpalast (Führer's Palace):** Hitler's official headquarters in Germania was to be built as a Baroque-style palace with a 400-seat theatre and a 900-m<sup>2</sup> office. Bulletproof shutters and steel gates would provide protection.

## Military heroes would share a tomb

**Soldatenhalle (Soldiers' Hall):** A granite crypt for army leaders past, present and future. The idea was to light the building purely by the fire in several large, bowl-shaped basins.

## Rising up after World War I

**Triumphal Arch:** Hitler provided the sketch for a World War I monument. Its walls would bear the names of the 1.8 million German soldiers who fell during WWI. According to Nazi ideology, Germany lost because the government failed its soldiers. The triumphal arch would restore the honour of the fallen – and inspire the German people to create future heroes.

● The monument would have risen **117 metres** above the city and been **170 m** wide.

● The Arc de Triomphe in Paris – which is **50 metres** high and **45 m** wide – could have stood inside the arch.

There were hotels, department stores and cinemas planned to sit along the Avenue of Splendours.

The street was designed to display captured weapons from Germany's enemies.

## Avenue would tie the city together

**Avenue of Splendours:** From the station in the south, a **5-km-long** and **120-m-wide** avenue – 20 metres wider than the Parisian main street, Champs-Élysées – would head north through the city.

## Railway station with mega-train

**Südbahnhof (South Station):** Berlin's southern station was to be built in steel and glass. Some of the tracks were to be **three metres wide**, carrying 48-hour services all the way to Moscow.



## Gigantic dome was the heart of the capital

**Volkshalle (People's Hall):** The long avenue would open into the **350,000 m<sup>2</sup>** Großer Platz square. At the northern end, Speer and Hitler would erect the huge Volkshalle – a temple for the Third Reich's new German racial movement.

ALBERT SPEER ARCHITECTURE

Volkshalle:  
320 m high

An eagle measuring **24 m** would sit above Hitler's rostrum.

The hall's balcony was **50 m** high and **28 m** wide.

Hitler's rostrum would have stood on the raised balcony opposite the entrance.

Statue of Liberty:  
46 m

MIKKEL JUUL JENSEN/HISTORIE MAGAZINE

## Volkshalle would break records

The diameter of the dome was set to be **250 metres**, or **16 times** larger than St. Peter's Basilica. **180,000 people** would be able to assemble inside.

**Speer himself drew most of the plans for Hitler's new capital, but they were never executed because of the war.**

ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY IMAGES

but its real purpose was to both impress and intimidate. Visitors had to approach the foyer along its façade – 421 metres long – and then make their entrance beneath an eagle figure with a 7.75-metre wingspan. The eagle stood on top of a giant swastika surrounded by a wreath.

To reach the Führer's study, the visitor first had to pass through a large hall – around 45 metres long – that had no windows and was completely clad in mosaic. The tour then proceeded through a marble gallery, modelled after the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles, but twice as long at 150 metres. At the end was Hitler's reception hall and the entrance to his study, which had a ceiling height of almost 10 metres. At the far end of the room lay Hitler's massive desk inlaid with wood and red marble. According to Nazi propaganda, Hitler worked here day and night, but the telephone on the desk lay out of the Führer's reach, and the table was covered in books, not papers.

Hitler had numerous ideas for how the building could intimidate visitors and guests.

For example, when Speer suggested placing carpet over the marble hall's polished floor, the Führer said no – the slippery surface would help reinforce their feelings of insecurity and ▶





anxiety, he explained – and Speer naturally complied.

### Money was no object

Hitler and Speer also worked closely together to realise the Führer's dream of Germania. Speer was given an office in the Academy of Arts building in *Pariser Platz* (Paris Place), close to Hitler's own residence in the old Reich Chancellery.

Separated by a single garden, it allowed Hitler to easily and unobtrusively visit Speer. Hitler's visits were almost daily

and lasted several hours at a time – usually after dark. The two men would pore over sketches and scale models while fantasising over Germany's greatness.

However, the project's enormous dimensions left Speer doubting whether the project could be fulfilled. He first had to test the weight-bearing capabilities of Berlin's sandy soils using a 12,650-tonne heavy concrete block called the *Schwerbelastungskörper* (heavy load-bearing body). If it sank less than six centimetres into the ground, then Speer

could proceed without the need to further stabilise the subsoil.

Nothing could deter Speer, who was happy to meet Hitler's grandiose demands. Renowned architect Gerdy Troost once remarked to Hitler: "Then you say to Herr Speer: 'Dear Speer, I need a building of 100 metres.' Speer immediately ejects: 'Jawohl mein Führer – 200 metres!' And you clap him on the back and say, 'Speer you are my man!'"

Among Berlin's citizens, rumours abounded of the party's profligate

## Architect became arms minister

**Hitler believed that Speer's ability to manage large building projects could be exploited by the German war machine, and so he moved his favourite into the Ministry of Armaments. Speer did not disappoint.**

In 1942 Hitler needed a new man for the post of armaments minister. The choice fell on his faithful and efficient architect. After his appointment, Speer quickly improved the ailing production of weapons and ammunition. Two years later, in 1944, the minister had stepped up production so much that he could supply equipment to 270 divisions, even though the Germans only possessed around 150.

The secret to his success, so Speer claimed, was giving industry a high degree of autonomy. His philosophy was that business owners had a natural interest in ramping up production to boost revenues. The minister also felt he was good at preventing waste and promoting greater efficiency – for example, by hiring younger staff in

the ministry. However, Speer's explanation doesn't tell the whole story.

### KZ camps provided slave labour

Increased production figures were also down to changes introduced by Speer's predecessor as well as an increasing use of slave labour. The unscrupulous Speer used Jews and other concentration camp prisoners in arms production. In the weapons factories,

prisoners frequently worked themselves to death on a diet of just 1,100 calories a day.

Some of Speer's subordinates voiced disgust, and even Henrich Himmler, notorious head of the SS, felt that Speer pushed his workers too hard. However, Hitler cheered on the high production figures and welcomed his methods.

Historians have also pointed out that the figures may not fully reflect the value of production. For example, Speer chose to produce outdated Messerschmitt fighters at the expense of more modern aircraft.

### PRODUCTION INCREASED:

#### TANKS:

1941: 3,623

1944: 18,956

#### FIGHTER PLANES:

1941: 8,729

1944: 34,614

#### SUBMARINES:

1941: 219

1944: 283



**Speer inspected and tested the equipment produced himself.**



spending on grandiose buildings, but Hitler remained unmoved.

"When the Finance Minister asks what it will cost, don't give him any answer. Say that nobody has any experience with building projects of such size," he advised Speer.

Hitler also justified the expense as being for Germany's well-being: "I am not acting out of megalomania, but on the rational consideration that only can a nation be given the self-assurance it needs for its historic task."

Hitler's indifference to the cost extended to the many people Speer evicted from their apartments to make room for the monumental buildings. These forced displacements, euphemistically referred to as 'evacuations', especially affected Jews. At least 75,000 were deported to make space for Germania, and the majority ended up in one of the extermination camps in the East.

#### Friends visited Paris together

After the New Reich Chancellery's construction, Hitler rewarded Speer with the "Golden Party Badge" along with a watercolour the dictator had painstakingly painted as a 20-year-old in Vienna. At the same time, he congratulated his architect publicly. Speer was an "ingenious designer and architect".

He referred to the New Reich Chancellery as "the first architectural creation of the new, great German Reich", one he confidently predicted would "outlast the centuries".

That was the plan, and in September 1939, Hitler began to pursue his goal of a Greater German Reich by sending troops across the border into Poland – World War II was underway.

Despite the war, the collaboration between Speer and Hitler continued undisturbed, and when the Führer visited Paris in 1940 after the conquest of France, his favourite architect was at his side. Together they toured the city's famous buildings: the Louvre, Notre-Dame and L'Opéra Garnier, which was of special interest to Hitler.

As they walked through the magnificent opera house, Hitler pointed out its many features and Speer noted that his eyes were "glittering with an excitement that struck me as uncanny".

"Wasn't Paris beautiful? But Berlin must be made far more beautiful... When we are finished in Berlin, Paris will only

be a shadow," Hitler insisted after the visit, and Speer redoubled his efforts.

But Germania got no further than the drawing board, because in February 1942 Speer's career took an unexpected turn. Minister of Armaments Fritz Todt died in a plane crash, and the important role of coordinating weapons production fell vacant. Hitler needed an effective replacement, and appointed Speer.

The appointment deprived Speer of time to develop his architectural ambitions. He rarely got to work on the huge buildings – and over time, plans for Germania slipped into the background. "My beautiful ghost town" was how he described it many years later.

#### Hitler drew comfort from sketches

As the war progressed, the bombs began to fall over Berlin. But Hitler was still optimistic – he argued that the devastation would spare him much demolition work where the new city was going to be built.

These optimistic tones were, however, a warning that the Führer was losing his grip on reality. As the tide of war turned against Germany, the dictator slipped into a state that was increasingly indicative of madness. His uniform increasingly worn and dishevelled, he now moved divisions that no longer existed, while commanding assistance from fighter planes that could no longer go on the wing because the Luftwaffe had run out of fuel.

Occasionally, Hitler found solace in pursuing his architectural dreams with Speer. The plan for Germania had faded into the background; now it was about rebuilding the Austrian city of Linz, where Hitler planned to retire.

As late as April 1945, the two met in the Führerbunker beneath the Reich Chancellery, and while the bombs shook the concrete ceiling, Hitler and Speer sat poring over the Linz plans, "mutely contemplating the dreams of yesteryear".

With his eyes on the drawings, Hitler became calmer and "in many ways he reminded me of the Hitler I had known at the beginning of our association twelve years before", Speer noted.

On 23rd April, the architect visited Hitler for the last time. Some historians suspect that Speer expected a death sentence because he'd ignored Hitler's order (now known as the Nero Decree) to

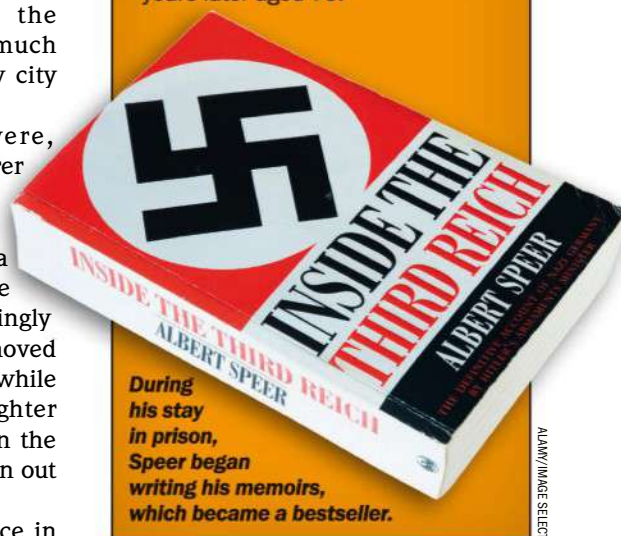
**"Wasn't Paris beautiful? Berlin must be made far more beautiful"**

Adolf Hitler, 1940

## Speer's remorse saved his life

Like several other senior Nazis, Speer was tried at Nuremberg for both war crimes and crimes against humanity. During his cross-examination, Speer was the one among the accused to unconditionally admit his guilt. At the same time, he portrayed himself as an apolitical artist who'd been seduced by Hitler.

Speer further claimed that he knew nothing about the Holocaust, which was later revealed to be a lie. However, his claim was enough to save him from the gallows. Instead, Speer served a full 20-year prison sentence in Spandau in West Berlin. He was released on 1st October 1966, and died 15 years later aged 76.



blow up all German bridges and factories to avoid the Allies making use of them. But Hitler was too fond of his architect.

Nevertheless, when Speer took his leave, Hitler's goodbye was curt: "So, you're leaving? Good. Auf Wiedersehen," he said with a brief handshake.

On his way out, Speer passed through the New Chancellery's Mosaic Room. The dark red marble was blackened, the glass ceiling had shattered and there were bomb craters everywhere. A few days later, on 1st May 1945, he was informed that Hitler had committed suicide. Speer burst into tears. Their grand dreams lay in ruins.

#### FURTHER READING

● Albert Speer: *Inside the Third Reich*, W&N, 2009 ● Joachim Fest: *Speer: The Final Verdict*, Orion, 2001 ● Martin Kitchen: *Speer: Hitler's Architect*, Yale University Press, 2017





*Hitler headed the procession of dignitaries as they entered Berlin's newly built stadium.*

# OLYMPICS USED

Hitler was not a fan of sport, but he understood the propaganda value of the Olympic Games and pulled out all the stops to show an idealised Nazi Germany to the world. Athletes, spectators and journalists from around the globe bought the story and reported back with excitement from those happy summer days in Berlin.



# FOR PROPAGANDA



Adolf Hitler

Theodor Lewald

Henri de Baillet-Latour





The Nazi Party has an iron grip on Germany. Jews are persecuted on a daily basis and the way Hitler is amassing weapons makes the rest of Europe worry about the Führer's intentions. But the Olympic Games in Berlin gives the Nazi propaganda machine a chance to portray Hitler's Germany as a peace-loving nation.

**T**HE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES had beaten all expectations. "They seem likely to accomplish what the rulers of Germany have frankly desired from them, that is, to give the world a new viewpoint from which to regard the Third Reich." So wrote *New York Times* journalist Frederick Birchall of the opening ceremony in Berlin on 1st August 1936.

The spectacle had awed the world's press. Young, ethnically diverse male and female athletes from different countries and continents marched into the newly built stadium under waving flags and paraded in peace before Adolf Hitler. When the last of 3,956 athletes from the 49 nations had entered the stadium, Hitler moved towards the microphone. Gone was the Führer's usual harsh tone and sharp rhetoric. Now the dictator spoke in a subdued and formal tone:

"I proclaim the Games of Berlin, celebrating the eleventh Olympiad of the modern era, to be open", he said as a flock of white doves were released and flew toward the leaden sky.

At the end of the formal opening, runner Siegfried Eifrig lit the Olympic flame, and Hitler was presented with an olive branch as a gift from Greece, home of the ancient Games. As

he stood between doves and olive branches, no one could have known that the dictator had originally expressed deep contempt for the Olympic Games.

### HITLER CHANGED HIS MIND

Berlin won the bid to host the games in 1931, and Hitler inherited the job after taking power in January 1933. But the role of Olympic host didn't appeal. He felt that the Games and its ideals of all people taking part in a noble competition were "an invention of Jews and Freemasons" and "could not be tolerated in a Reich ruled by the National Socialists".

Sport certainly played an important role in Nazi society, and the area had its own minister, Colonel Hans von Tschammer und Osten. But its purpose was to prepare the population for war – or as propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels put it:

"German sport has only one task: to strengthen the character of the German people, imbuing it with the fighting spirit and steadfast camaraderie necessary in the struggle for its existence".

Gradually, however, Hitler began to see the advantages of acting as a host. He knew that much of the world viewed him

**"There will be no discrimination  
in Berlin against Jews"**

Frederick W Rubien, US Olympic Committee member, 1935



On the way through a rainy Berlin, the Olympic flame was accompanied by an escort of athletes.





NAME

**JESSE OWENS**

TITLE

ATHLETE

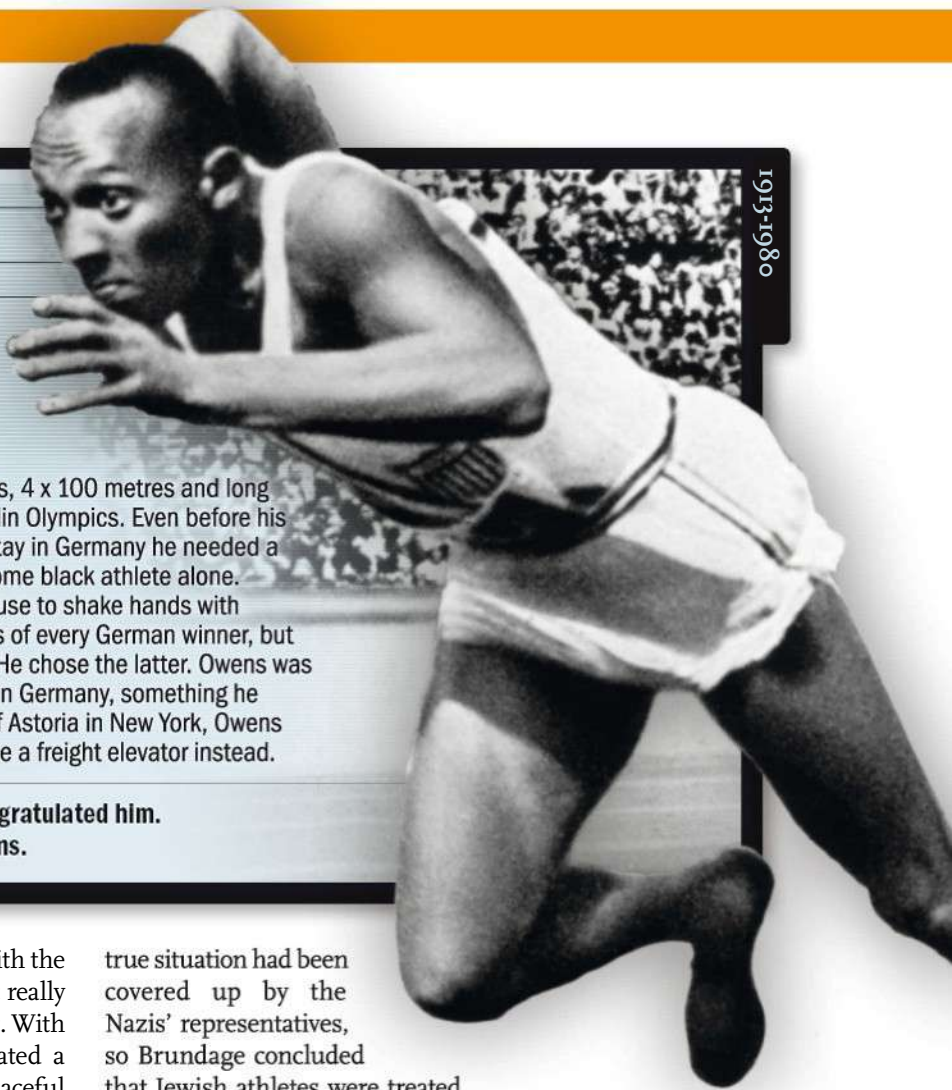
## Black athlete was the Games' star

With four gold medals in the 100 metres, 200 metres, 4 x 100 metres and long jump, American Jesse Owens was the star of the Berlin Olympics. Even before his arrival, Owens was a big name, and throughout his stay in Germany he needed a bodyguard, because girls could not leave the handsome black athlete alone.

Contrary to popular belief, Hitler didn't actually refuse to shake hands with Owens. On the first day, the dictator shook the hands of every German winner, but organisers asked Hitler to greet everyone or no one. He chose the latter. Owens was also able to follow his white teammates everywhere in Germany, something he couldn't do back home. At a reception at the Waldorf Astoria in New York, Owens wasn't permitted to use the main door, but had to use a freight elevator instead.

- Was rankled that President Roosevelt never congratulated him.
- Ended his sports career due to financial problems.

1913-1980



and the Nazi Party with scepticism. At the Olympics, with the world's attention, he could make Germany appear as it really was or – rather – as Hitler wanted the world to perceive it. With great enthusiasm, the dictator and his advisers created a backdrop that would show a squeaky-clean, open and peaceful Germany. One important goal had already been achieved in December 1935 when the US Olympic Committee decided not to boycott the Berlin event.

Hitler's Germany was notorious for its persecution of the Jews – an unpleasant fact that neither the magnificent autobahn-building programme nor an impressive economic recovery could persuade the world to forget. The International Olympic Committee was therefore fully aware that Jews and non-whites were discriminated against in Nazi Germany.

Hitler had already excluded Jews from German sports clubs and public swimming pools, prompting many Jewish athletes to either give up or continue their careers abroad. The development was of particular concern to the US, who had the largest Olympic team.

"The very foundation of the modern Olympic revival will be undermined if individual countries are allowed to restrict participation by reason of class, creed, or race," stated Avery Brundage, President of the US Olympic Committee.

When Brundage had visited Germany in 1934, the

true situation had been covered up by the Nazis' representatives, so Brundage concluded that Jewish athletes were treated fairly, and that a boycott was unnecessary. Sports and politics should be kept separate and American athletes should refrain from interfering in "the present Jew-Nazi altercation" as Brundage described it.

### JEWISH HIGH JUMPER WAS DROPPED

Things were different in the Third Reich. Outwardly, the regime maintained a façade of non-discrimination, while inwardly it continued to stubbornly exclude Jewish athletes from events. To avoid foreign criticism, Nazis tried – among ➤

*Dora Ratjen entered the women's high jump for Germany – 'she' was later revealed to be a 'he'.*



*Jewish Gretel Bergmann was Germany's best high jumper, but was not allowed to compete.*

*Helene Mayer's father was a Jew. Yet she became a symbol of the new Germany.*





## SPORTS ARENA

# Sports stadium to dazzle the world

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, plans to refit Berlin's existing Olympic stadium were already well underway, but Hitler decided to erect the monumental Reichssportfeld instead.

Berlin was chosen to host the Olympics in 1916, but World War I got in the way, and the new stadium was never used. When Berlin was chosen as the host city for the 1936 Games, the German government planned to refit the existing stadium.

When Hitler came to power in 1933, all that changed. On an inspection tour of the construction site, the Führer realised the potential for a world event like the Olympics. The Nazis had a unique opportunity to give the outside world a new vision of the country. Hitler decided to build a facility that was larger and more impressive than anything the world had seen so far. The result was the huge sports complex Reichssportfeld, which according to Hitler would last for 1,000 years.

## NEW PARK SURPASSED ALL

FACT

- Area: 1.32 square kilometres
- Stadium capacity: 110,000
- Number of employees: 2,064
- Chief Architect: Werner March
- Estimated cost: 27 million mark\*

\*c. £240,000,000 present value

Nazi top brass watched from a special balcony for dignitaries.



The crowd offered Nazi salutes whenever a German competitor performed well.



**Belfry**  
The words "Ich rufe die Jugend der Welt" (I call the Youth of the World) were cast in relief on a bell placed between two swastikas in a 77-metre-high tower.

Garden

Riding stables

Riding arena

Dietrich Eckart stage

Dance area

other things – to get Jewish high jumper Gretel Bergmann to enter qualification events for the German team.

Bergmann, who had settled in England, was brought home by her father in 1934, who had been told by the regime that she had to represent Germany. The authorities had made it clear to her father that the family would be punished otherwise. As Bergmann later remarked: "In Germany then a hint was enough. You did what you were told or else."

Bergmann returned to Germany, where, with a jump of 1.60 metres she beat the national record. The performance however, was too much for the Nazis. The powers that be struck Bergmann's result from the records and said that she was not good enough to participate in the Games.

Instead of Bergmann, Dora Ratjen competed in the women's high jump, finishing in fourth place. It was only later – in 1938 – that Ratjen was discovered to be male. In the meantime, Nazi

preparations for the Games saw a superficial change of attitude towards Jewish guests. The anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*, which usually appeared on shelves all over Berlin, was temporarily closed and Berliners were warned to receive Jewish visitors to the games "as politely as Aryan guests". Also signs reading "No Jews or dogs allowed" that hung in parks and public places were hidden until after the Games.

To be sure that all this courtesy was not misconstrued, the authorities added that "the fundamental attitude of the German people towards Judaism remains unchanged".

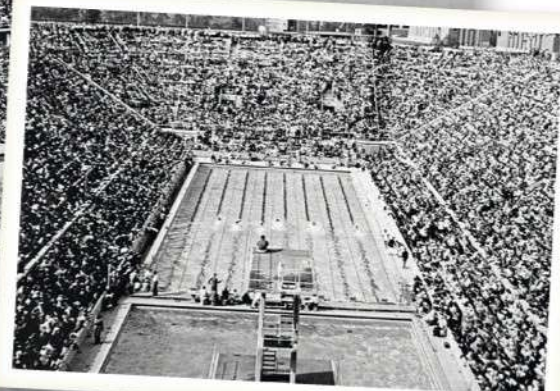
## THE NAZIS PRESENTED A GLOSSY IMAGE

Meanwhile, the streets and roads were decorated. Abandoned buildings were rented out cheaply and residents were given strict orders to keep their front gardens weed-free and clear of rubbish. Similarly, local leaders warned that all major streets



*The Olympic flame burned in a modern torch throughout the 16 days.*

## Olympic park



*A total of 140,231 spectators watched the swimming events, which were held in the 50-metre-long by 20-metre-wide pool.*

### Marathon Gate

The marathon was completed when the runners came in through the gate, which was also used as the entrance for Hitler's arrival; above the gate burned the Olympic flame.

### Swimming stadium

### Tennis courts

### Hockey pitch

**Sports field**  
112,000 square metres of grassy area for gymnastic performances.

### Stadium

### Olympic square

### Olympic gate

52 turnstiles led the audience into the stadium. Today the gate leads to football club Hertha Berlin's home ground.

### Coubertin Square

Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, was honoured with a small square.

### S-Bahn

Just south of the site was S-Bahn Station, later renamed the Olympia Station.



*In 1935, Germany began producing Olympic badges. About 700,000 were sold.*

should remain clean and tidy. Unsavoury people were also removed: prostitutes were arrested, beggars moved on and Romani folk placed in a special gypsy camp. Prisoners were sent to places where they could not be seen while inmates in concentration camps, who had yet to be exterminated, were held indoors instead of working as slave labour in the fields, as they usually did.

The image of this hospitable Germany was accompanied by good conditions for the competitors. At previous Olympic

Games athletes had stayed in miserable surroundings – at best, hastily built barracks near the stadium, but typically they were referred to cheap and filthy hotels. Four years earlier, Los Angeles had experimented with offering athletes accommodation in a purpose-built city near the stadium. “The village”, as the area was called, contained residential property and services like a post office, police station and a small cinema. The innovation was praised, and in 1936 the Nazis refined the concept near the village of Elstal outside the city. ►

**“The organisational ability of the German nation has never been so palpably in evidence”**

*Daily Express, 1st August 1936*





*Although Hitler refused to shake hands with the winners at the Olympic Stadium, he saluted individual gold medal winners, including British rower Jack Beresford. In Berlin, Beresford won a medal for the fifth Olympics in a row, a record that stood for 60 years.*

Wehrmacht soldiers led by Captain Wolfgang Fürstner moved tonnes of sand and mud to level the ground and exterminated all the mosquitoes in the boggy area.

Fürstner was perfect for propaganda. In addition to having been awarded an Iron Cross 1st Class for his efforts in World War I, he was half-Jewish. Hitler was keen to show that his Germany did not discriminate by creed, but was a meritocracy, and so he chose Fürstner to represent the Olympic village.

Hitler was unable to carry off the scam completely, however. In mid-June, after about 370,000 people, including the press, had admired the village, Fürstner was relegated to second-in-command. His demotion was allegedly due to the captain's failure to meet the needs of visitors to the village.

Fürstner put on a brave face until three days after the end of the Olympics. After being awarded the Olympic medal 1st Class and attending a banquet for his successor, he shot himself. To avoid their propaganda victory being undermined, the Nazis claimed that Fürstner had died in an accident and buried him with full military honours at the Invalids' Cemetery.

#### **SUCCESS CAME HOME**

The Nazi bluff appeared to work, and the Games were a great success. Those 16 summer days in Berlin featured several notable accomplishments – among the most memorable was top American athlete Jesse Owens. Born into a family of

poor farm workers in the southern state of Alabama, Owens was met with almost hysterical adulation in Germany. The excitement reached new heights on 3rd August, when the American won gold in the 100 metres. As one contemporary commentator put it, when Owens ran, everyone else looked like they were walking.

Hitler was less impressed. "The Americans should be ashamed of themselves, letting Negroes win their medals for them", he stated according to Baldur von Schirach. And Albert Speer remembered Hitler stating that "people whose antecedents came from the jungle" had a stronger physique and should be excluded from future Games.

Naturally, the public was not made aware of the Nazi leader's racist comments, and outwardly Hitler appeared completely humane. Every day he sat alongside other top Nazis at the stadium and smiled and waved at the winners. The image wasn't even destroyed when the Nazis flexed their military muscle: on 13th August the hosts dished up a military parade at the stadium. To the tones of Wagner, soldiers from all three services goose-stepped across the arena.

Three days later, five cannon shots rang from the new stadium and the scoreboard proclaimed: "The last shot is fired". Hitler's goal had been achieved – with 16 days of well-staged Nazi propaganda he had managed to seduce the world. ■

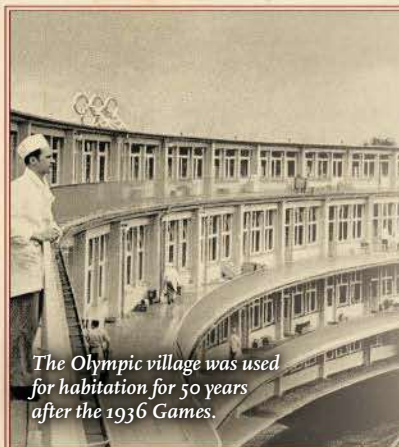
**"I think it was bad taste to criticise the 'man of the hour' in another country"**

*Jesse Owens about Hitler in an interview after returning to the US in the newspaper Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 24th August 1936*



# Hitler's Olympic innovations

The Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 was a magnificent sporting event, and founded traditions that continued in later Games. The war meant that the world had to wait 12 years for the next Olympics which were held in London in 1948. Germany was excluded from taking part.



*The Olympic village was used for habitation for 50 years after the 1936 Games.*

## Athletes lived in a village

At the Olympics in 1932 in Los Angeles male athletes stayed in barracks, which were demolished afterwards. In Berlin, all competitors lived in real houses and had facilities like a hospital, sauna and swimming pool available to them. The buildings are dilapidated now, but Jesse Owens' room has been renovated and looks as it did when he used it.

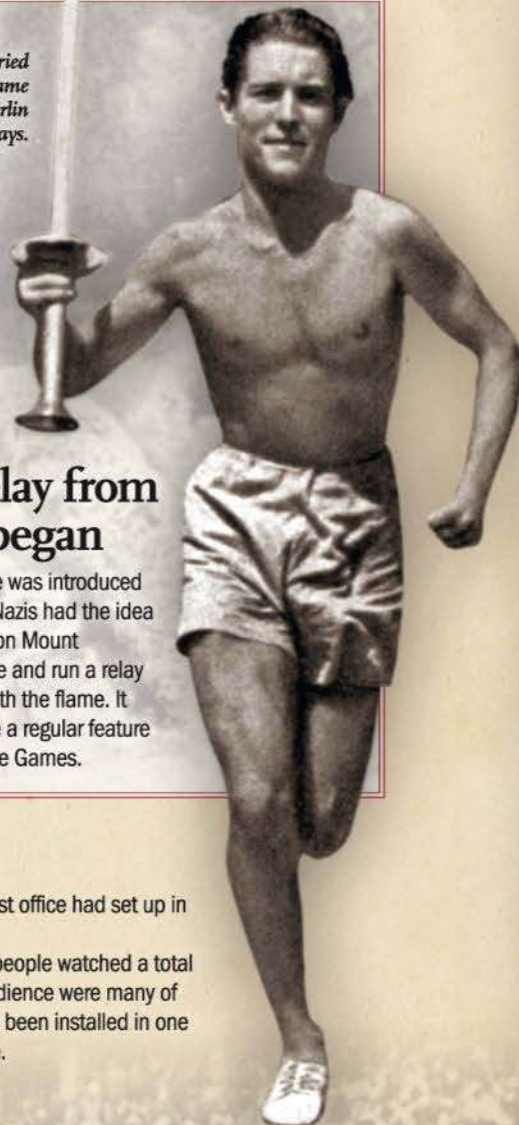
## Committee voted on host city

Prior to 1932, the International Olympic Committee negotiated the host city, but the selection for 1936 was made after a vote by IOC members. Berlin's competitor, Barcelona, received 16 votes to the German city's 43.



*The Olympic rings were designed in 1912 by Pierre de Coubertin and were used in 1936.*

*3,331 runners carried the Olympic flame from Greece to Berlin in 12 days.*



## Torch relay from Greece began

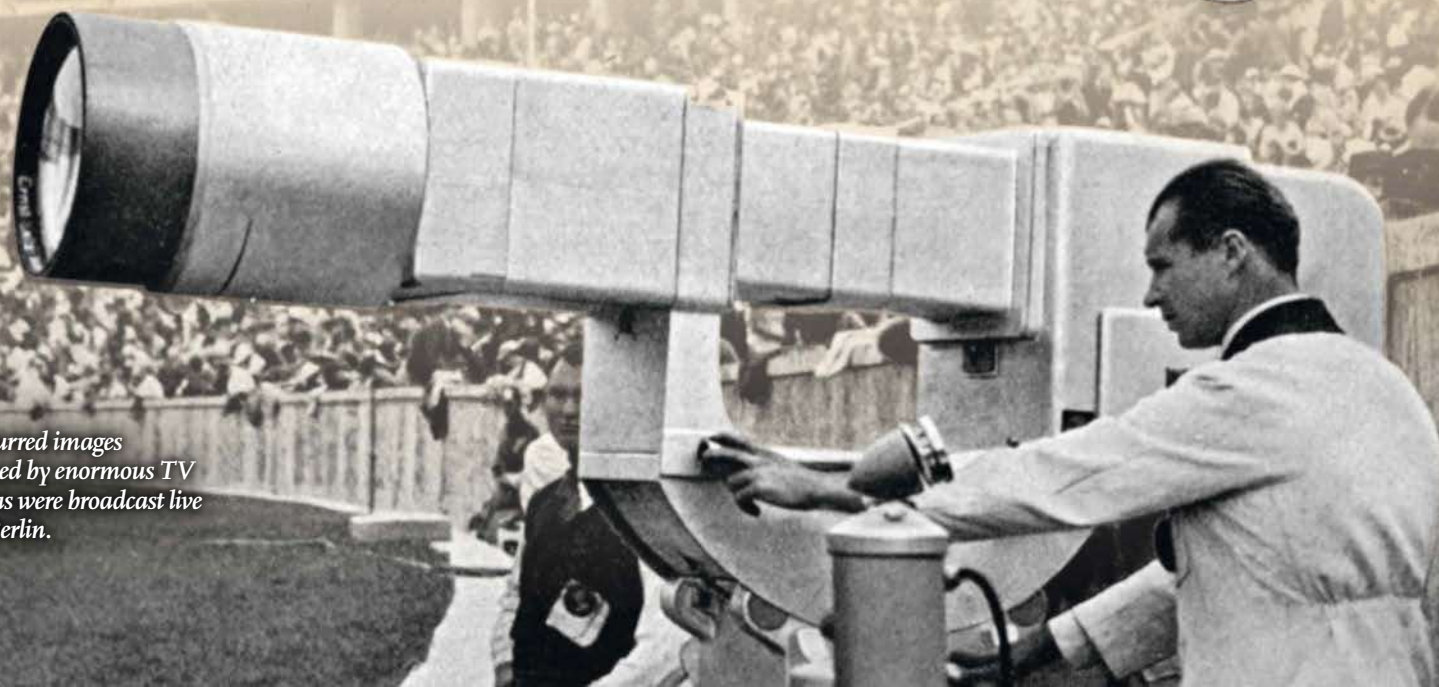
The Olympic flame was introduced in 1928, but the Nazis had the idea to light the flame on Mount Olympus in Greece and run a relay through Europe with the flame. It has since become a regular feature of the run up to the Games.

## Games' television transmission was a world first

The Olympics in Berlin were the first live televised sports event in the world. The cameras at the Reichssportsfeld captured the events, and images were broadcast directly via a transmitter in the suburbs of Witzleben, close to the stadium. Two special cables connected to the sports radio tower in Berlin. The image quality was poor, but despite the weak signal, TV viewers flocked to the

small theatre-like viewing rooms that the post office had set up in the suburbs of Berlin and Potsdam.

Historians estimate that some 160,000 people watched a total of 72 hours of live television. Among the audience were many of the athletes themselves, as a TV screen had been installed in one of the public buildings in the Olympic village.



*The blurred images produced by enormous TV cameras were broadcast live from Berlin.*





# HITLER'S EASIEST VICTORY

Not a single shot is fired when Hitler's troops march into Austria. In each city, brass bands and happy school children wait for the German soldiers. The persecution of Jews, however, begins immediately.





*More than 200,000 people gathered at Heldenplatz in Vienna to hear Hitler announce Austria's 'Anschluss' [joining] with Nazi Germany.*





**Bloody battles between political factions in the early 1930s result in the Austrian chancellor introducing a Catholic national dictatorship. The country is impoverished, and unemployment is high. Many Austrians – not just Nazis – want unification with Germany so they can experience economic growth with Hitler in power.**

**W**HEN ADOLF HITLER STEPPED OUT ONTO THE BALCONY, a human sea began to boil under him. Around 200,000 Austrians had gathered in the square in front of the Hofburg, Vienna's old Imperial Palace, to hear him. With a lump in his throat, he stated that their country was now part of Germany. The crowd responded with thundering cheers and Nazi salutes.

It was 15th March, 1938. Austria had just ceased to exist as an independent state, but no one mourned its loss.

On the contrary, it seemed that the country had been waiting to surrender, as three days earlier 50,000 German soldiers had crossed the border.

The Austrians hadn't fired a single shot to defend their country, not one soldier was injured in battle. Instead, the Germans were welcomed by brass bands and happy children who'd been given the day off school for the occasion.

#### **FARMLAND ABANDONED**

The majority of Austrians had no great loyalty for their country, which had been the biggest loser in World War I. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, they'd been part of the

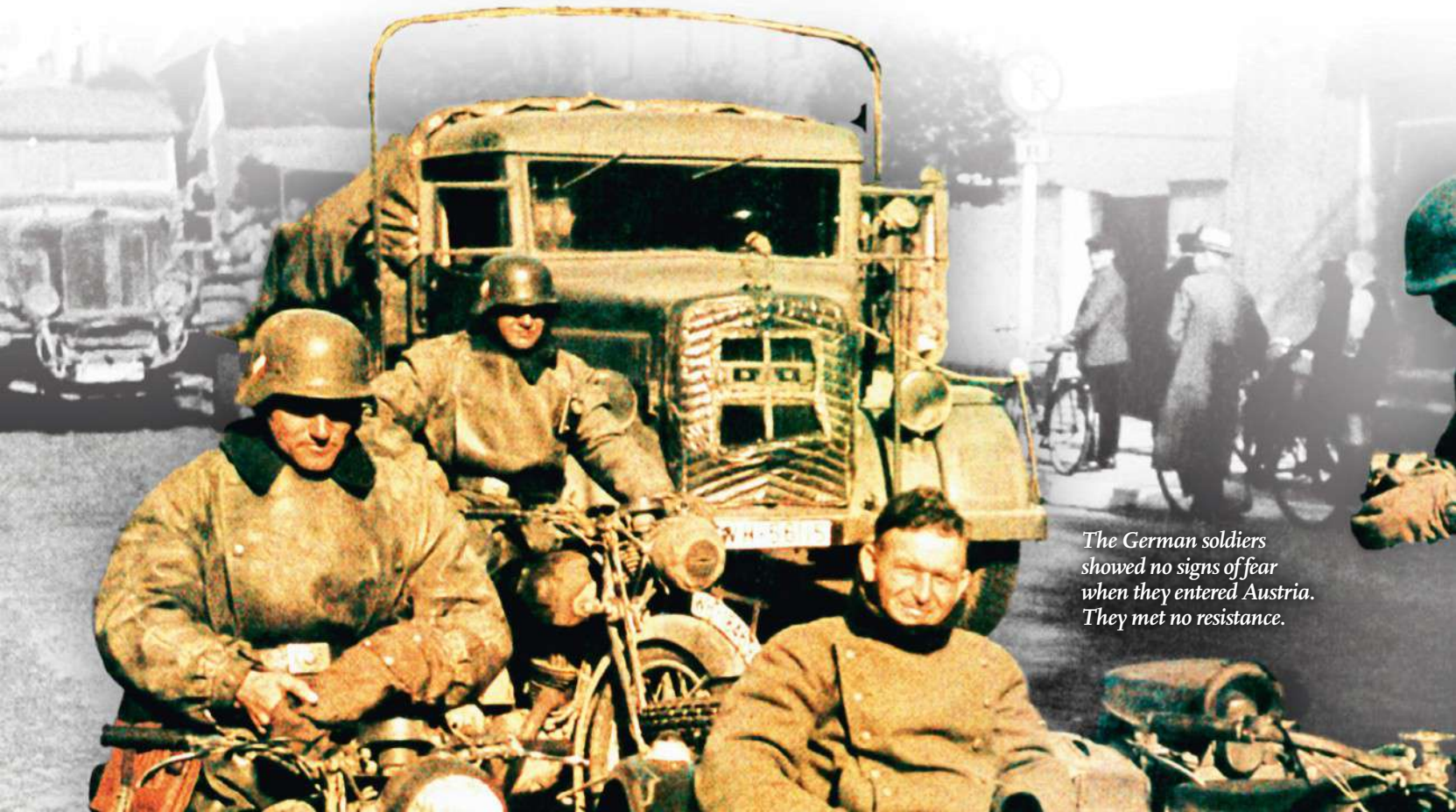
Austro-Hungarian Empire – a great European power with 50 million inhabitants and a territory that spread across Central Europe and the Balkans.

When the war ended four years later, the emperor had abdicated, the bulk of its territory was lost, and Austria had become an insignificant nation of seven million inhabitants.

A third of those lived in Vienna, which once served as the administrative centre of the empire. Now the many thousands of officials had no empire to administer. "Hydrocephalus Vienna" was how some Austrians unkindly referred to their capital, which no longer served any major purpose other than to serve as a burden on the reduced state.

Industrialisation lagged behind the rest of Europe leaving Austria a poor and backward agrarian country. Against this background, most of the politicians in parliament believed that the country had no future. During the peace negotiations, they'd wanted to be annexed by Germany, but the victors Britain and France refused. They feared that such an annexation would lead to a new, stronger Greater Germany.

The Austrians were on their own, and their politicians were deeply divided about which way to go. The dominant



*The German soldiers showed no signs of fear when they entered Austria. They met no resistance.*



Christian Social Party wanted a dictatorship, while the left hoped for a proletarian revolution like Russia. Factory owners put up resistance against the workers' unions. Both sides employed armed guards, and frequently clashed violently.

In 1927, two people were killed in a conflict between the two sides. But when the perpetrators from the right-wing *Frontkämpferversammlung* (Front Combat Association) escaped punishment, the leftists set fire to the Palace of Justice. Vienna's police chief gave orders to shoot at the demonstrators and 89 died in the subsequent hail of bullets.

## AUSTRIA BECOMES A DICTATORSHIP

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 sent shock waves through the Austrian population, where unemployment rose to 500,000 – over 20 percent of the population.

In this desperate situation, the Austrians' admiration for Germany's new strong man, Adolf Hitler, rose. After taking the reins of power in Germany in 1933, he began to perform apparent economic miracles: production grew, unemployment fell, and the German standard of living increased.

The Austrian Nazi party experienced a marked increase in membership and it put pressure on the Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. Party leaders demanded new elections so that they could repeat Hitler's success and gain power in parliament.

But the Christian-Social chancellor fought back. He appointed himself dictator: Dollfuss sent MPs home, banned political parties, and abolished freedom of the press.

Hitler increased the pressure by launching a trade war against Austria: all Germans who entered the neighbouring country on holiday had to pay a tax of 1,000 Reichsmarks. The new tax paralysed Austria's tourism and cost the country dearly, but Dollfuss stood firm and imposed further decrees.

## BOMBINGS TERRORISED POPULATION

After New Year 1934, Austrian Nazis launched a wave of terrorist attacks in order to destabilise the country. In the first week of January, 140 bombs exploded.

Hitler hoped his Austrian minions could carry out a Nazi takeover using the same strategies that had handed him power in Germany – by weakening the Dollfuss government with street violence before gaining power democratically. But after seven months of terror and violence, he had to admit that

Dollfuss was too strong. If he wanted to control Austria, he'd have become even more heavy-handed.

On 25th July, 50 Austrian Nazis stormed the Chancellery and shot Dollfuss.

The assassination should have been the start of a coup d'état, but Hitler had made a mistake: the coup leaders had barely proclaimed their Nazi government when Benito Mussolini intervened.

Italy's dictator had initially supported Dollfuss, whom he saw as a counterweight to the emerging Hitler. Now Mussolini reacted resolutely: in unequivocal terms he condemned the coup and made it clear that he would go to war if Germany did not stay away. A surprised Hitler was forced to publicly denounce the death of Dollfuss and deny the fleeing coup ▶



NAME **DOLLFUSS**  
TITLE CHANCELLOR OF AUSTRIA

### Dictator tried to rescue Austria from chaos

Engelbert Dollfuss became Austrian chancellor in 1932, but his government was weak. In 1933, Dollfuss closed parliament and appointed himself leader of a Catholic-national dictatorship that would rescue Austria from falling into the hands of either the fascists or communists.

- ▶ Lawyer and head of Austrian Christian Social Party.
- ▶ Was shot in 1934 in a failed Nazi coup attempt.



1892-1934

NAME **VON PAPEN**  
TITLE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN VIENNA

### Hitler wanted German envoy murdered

When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, Franz von Papen became vice chancellor, but he opposed the Nazis. Hitler did not dare touch him but sent him to Vienna. The plan was that von Papen would be murdered.

- ▶ German Ambassador to Vienna 1933-38.
- ▶ German Ambassador to Turkey 1939-44.



1879-1969

NAME **SCHUSCHNIGG**  
TITLE DOLLFUSS' SUCCESSOR

### Austrian chancellor sent to KZ camp

Kurt Schuschnigg took over the Austrian chancellor's post after Dollfuss's death. In 1938, Schuschnigg refused to comply with Hitler's conditions, leading to his internment, first in prison and later at a KZ camp. Schuschnigg survived and was liberated in 1945.

- ▶ Head of Austrian Christian Social Party.
- ▶ Professor of State Law in the United States 1948-67.



1897-1977

NAME **SEYSS-INQUART**  
TITLE HITLER'S MAN IN AUSTRIA

### Stooge was chancellor for two days

Arthur Seyss-Inquart paved the way for Germany's annexation of Austria. On Hitler's order he assumed the post of chancellor after Schuschnigg. Seyss-Inquart drew up the papers that actually dissolved the Austrian state. At the same time, he joined the Nazi party.

- ▶ Interior Minister in Schuschnigg's Cabinet.
- ▶ Enthusiastic supporter of Nazism after Anschluss.



1892-1946





Hitler held a referendum on the merger of the two countries. There was no doubt about the result.

leaders refuge in Germany. Within four days, the Nazi coup attempt was defeated by the Austrian army and police force – 13,000 Nazis were sent to jail.

### HITLER'S DESPERATION

Hitler continued his subversive tactics against Dollfuss's successor, Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg.

In 1936 Hitler succeeded in pushing through an agreement that guaranteed the Nazis places in the Austrian government. In return Hitler promised an end to the violence. The promise did not even last a year before more bombs shook the country.

Germany was busy rearming in preparation for war, but the country lacked raw materials, labour and currency.

Annexing Austria was more important than ever. The country had rich deposits of iron ore and copper as well as wood. In addition, Austrian Jews had savings totalling 1.4 billion Reichsmarks – 20 times more than the reserves in the weak German national bank.

In January 1938 Hitler ordered another coup be attempted. The plans were discovered, however, and the ringleaders exposed, carrying orders signed by Rudolf Hess – Hitler's deputy in Berlin.

According to the plans the German ambassador to Vienna Franz von Papen was to be murdered in the confusion to make the coup look like an internal affair. The coup aimed to provide Hitler with a welcome opportunity to get rid of a political opponent – von Papen had been opposed to the idea of annexing Austria. Even though Hitler's plans had been thwarted this time, police stormed the Austrian Nazi party headquarters again.

Mussolini had switched sides in order to secure Hitler's support for his conquest of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) and did not intervene. Neither France nor Great Britain could help

**748,000,000**

Reichsmarks from Austria's treasury supported the German economy, while Austria's iron mines supplied raw material for Germany's arms industry.



Austria – the French were paralysed by a domestic crisis, and British Prime Minister Chamberlain was happy to concede Hitler anything to preserve peace.

### SCHUSCHNIGG FEARS FOR HIS LIFE

On 12th February, 1938, the Austrian chancellor received an invitation he could not refuse. Hitler wanted to see him at his Berghof residence in the Bavarian Alps.

Schuschnigg was suspicious. He still believed in a negotiated solution but had taken precautions. If he was not back in Austria before 21.00 that evening the Austrian army were ordered to close the borders.

When Schuschnigg politely complimented the view from Hitler's windows over the mountains Hitler brushed his comments aside: "We did not gather here to speak of the fine view or of the weather," he snarled as he laid out his demands. In a largely one-sided discussion, the Führer claimed he was a better Austrian than Schuschnigg, adding: "I have a historic mission and this mission I will fulfil because Providence has destined me to do so. Who is not with me will be crushed!" Hitler roared. Schuschnigg had to release all imprisoned

Nazis and lift the ban on the party. He was to dismiss the military chief-of-staff, subordinate his foreign policy to Germany, and appoint Austrian Nazi Arthur Seyss-Inquart as interior minister. So Hitler would gain control of the police force.

### REFERENDUM TRIGGERS COUP

"I'm glad to say, however, that the Austrian Chancellor has shown insight and satisfactory agreement has been reached



# Anschluss paved the way for Hitler's Europe

The annexation of Austria proved to be a useful experience for Hitler. He learned to manipulate sceptical Western powers and made tactical agreements with his opponents in pursuit of his goal – the German Reich.



The semi-automatic Luger was the handgun issued to German officers.

## Germany

### Growth aroused admiration

Since Adolf Hitler's takeover of power in 1933, Germany had eradicated unemployment. German economic prosperity aroused admiration in neighbouring countries.

## Austria

### German superiority

Austria was hit hard by economic crisis, political turmoil and terror. Annexation with Germany gave Austria peace, order and prosperity.

## Czechoslovakia

### A patchwork of minorities

Czechoslovakia was one of several new, small countries that emerged from the division of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I. The country was easy to dismantle.

## 1 Hitler incorporates Austria into Germany

German soldiers enter Austria on 12th March, 1938. They are met with elation, and at a subsequent referendum 99.7 percent of them vote yes for annexation with Germany.



No Austrian border guards intervened as the Germans crossed the border.



## 4 Invasion of Poland

After concluding a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, Hitler invades Poland on 1st September, 1939. Britain and France declare war on Germany.

## 3 Germany takes Czechoslovakia

Almost without any resistance, German troops occupy the rest of Czechoslovakia on 15th March, 1939. Divided in two, Slovakia becomes a vassal state before the Germans occupy it after an uprising in 1944.

## 2 Home of the Reich

After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, around three million ethnic Germans live in Czechoslovakia. Hitler plans to restore them to the "Greater German Reich" by invading the Sudetenland. The French and British accept the invasion.

with Austria," Hitler said in a radio speech a few days after the meeting. But Schuschnigg had decided to resist. Austria should never be part of Nazi Germany, Austria could and would remain independent, he stated in a number of inflammatory speeches to his compatriots. "Rotweissrot bis in den tot!" (Red-white-red until we are dead!) he declared, referring to the colours of the Austrian flag.

Schuschnigg's speeches were greeted with tumultuous applause, so the chancellor decided to secure popular support. On 9th March, he issued a referendum to determine whether the Austrians should retain their independence. The vote would take place just four days later, and a hectic election campaign began. To Hitler's great annoyance, the Austrian chancellor was greeted everywhere he went with cheers and rejoicing. Time was running out, Hitler acknowledged. If the Austrians voted yes to remaining independent, his plans for taking over the country – and establishing a Greater Germany – would take a long time. The vote should be prevented at all costs.

On 11th March, Hitler decided to force a solution to the problem. At 10.00 he called Vienna and threatened the use

of military force unless the referendum was postponed. Schuschnigg was given four hours to answer.

## CHANCELLOR LOSES BATTLE OF WILLS

Kurt Schuschnigg hesitated. He knew a military conflict would cost the Austrians dear. In the middle of the afternoon he called his loyal cabinet members together. From the window of the Chancellery, he could hear the patriotic song "O, Du mein Österreich" (Oh, thou my Austria!) played in the streets over scratchy loudspeakers to raise people's spirits.

At 14.45 he promised Hitler he would cancel the referendum. The German dictator then blatantly issued new demands: Schuschnigg had to resign and Interior Minister Seyss-Inquart would take up his post. At 15.30 Schuschnigg stepped down. Before he had cleared his office Seyss-Inquart and his people moved in: "Around them began a busy coming and going of strange-looking men, with close-cropped hair, some of them completely shorn, and most of them with heavy sabre-scars across their faces," Schuschnigg noted.

At 20.15 Schuschnigg spoke over the radio for the last time. He told the Austrian people that he had postponed the ►

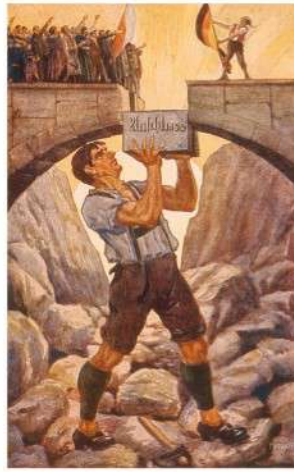




referendum and was determined to avoid bloodshed. The Austrian army, which was otherwise mobilised, received orders to move away from the border and soldiers were ordered not to open fire.

Austria had capitulated and throughout the country Nazis poured into the streets to celebrate the forthcoming unification with Germany, the so-called “*Anschluss*” (Joining).

That very same evening persecution of Jewish residents began. In Vienna, where the majority of the country’s Jews lived, there were violent assaults and the plundering of Jewish shops. The assaults immediately triggered a flow of refugees out of Austria. The international night trains were full and the road to Czechoslovakia was packed with cars.



*Nazi propaganda said that only one stone was missing before Austrians and Germans could become one.*

German dictator. After four hours, he finally arrived and was able to address his first speech to the Austrians at Linz Town Hall Square:

“If Providence once called me forth from this town to be the leader of the Reich, it must in so doing have charged me with a mission, and that mission could only be to restore my dear homeland to the German Reich. I have believed in this mission, I have lived and fought for it, and believe I have now fulfilled it.”

After two days in Linz, Hitler moved on to the capital Vienna, where new cheering crowds awaited him. He’d left the city 23 years earlier as a tattered vagabond, now he was one of Europe’s most powerful men – and his countrymen were ready to follow

him. The results of a referendum in April 1938 showed that 99.7 percent of the population voted for the absorption of Austria into Germany.

Shortly after his radio broadcast on 11th March, Schuschnigg was arrested. He was later taken to the Dachau concentration camp where he stayed until 1945. After World War II, Schuschnigg emigrated to the United States, where he became a professor of state law at the University of St. Louis.

Schuschnigg’s successor, Chancellor Seyss-Inquart, was only in his position for a few days before Austria as a nation was abolished. He later became the Reich Commissar for the occupied Netherlands, where he organised the deportation of 100,000 Jews. After the war he was convicted as a war criminal in Nuremberg and hanged in 1946. ■

## HITLER VISITS HIS BIRTHPLACE

Early in the morning of 12th March the German army began to move. Its advance through Austria was smooth and without delay, and by the afternoon Hitler himself drove into the annexed country – the land of his birth. His first stop was the village of Braunau am Inn where he was born in 1889.

His old childhood home had been transformed into a tavern, and earlier in the day the first German soldiers on the scene had marked the occasion by signing the innkeeper’s guestbook to announce their arrival in Austria.

From Braunau the procession moved on to Linz, where the Hitler family had moved to when Adolf went to school. The motorcade travelled for 120 kilometres and thousands of happy Austrians stood along the road to pay tribute to the

## Hitler planned to retire to Linz

The Austrian town on the Danube would become a Nazi metropolis and home to Adolf Hitler when he stepped down as Führer. The town would have an opera, theatre and an art museum.

Germany was in, Hitler’s eyes, the world’s leading nation, but he himself was born in Austria. Admittedly his parents, Alois and Klara, were ethnic Germans, but the dictator spent his

entire childhood and youth in Austria, particularly in the city of Linz on the Danube river in northern Austria.

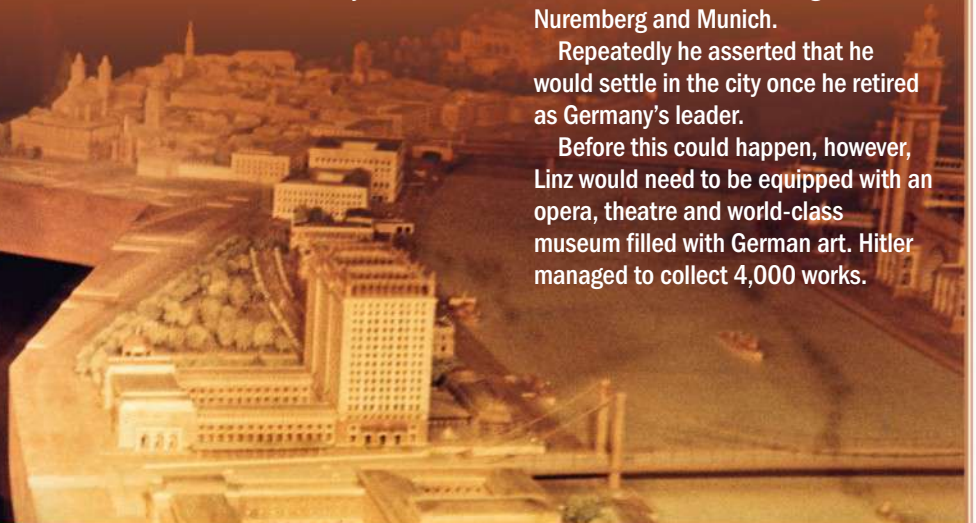
It was here he went to school, and as an adult described those years as the

happiest of his life. It was the teachers of Linz who encouraged his interest in history. As an adult, he dreamed of making the city a Führer City alongside the cities of Berlin, Hamburg, Nuremberg and Munich.

Repeatedly he asserted that he would settle in the city once he retired as Germany’s leader.

Before this could happen, however, Linz would need to be equipped with an opera, theatre and world-class museum filled with German art. Hitler managed to collect 4,000 works.

*Adolf Hitler had models made of his planned Führer City Linz.*

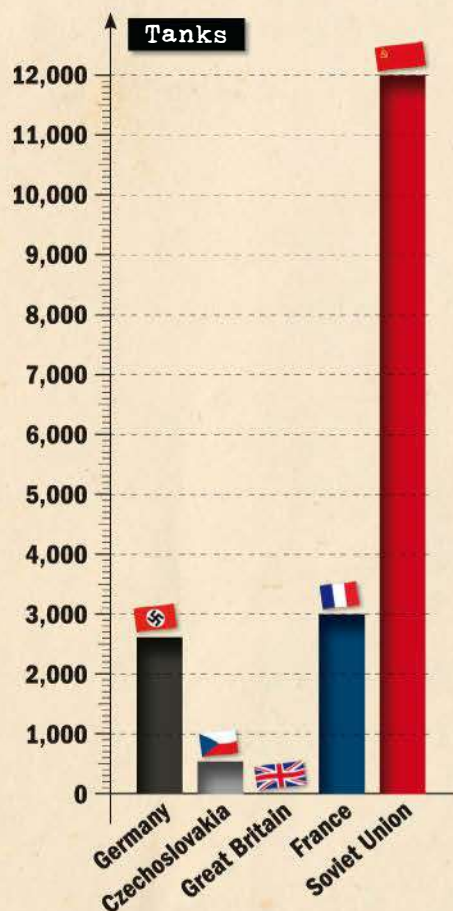




# Hitler's army was not ready

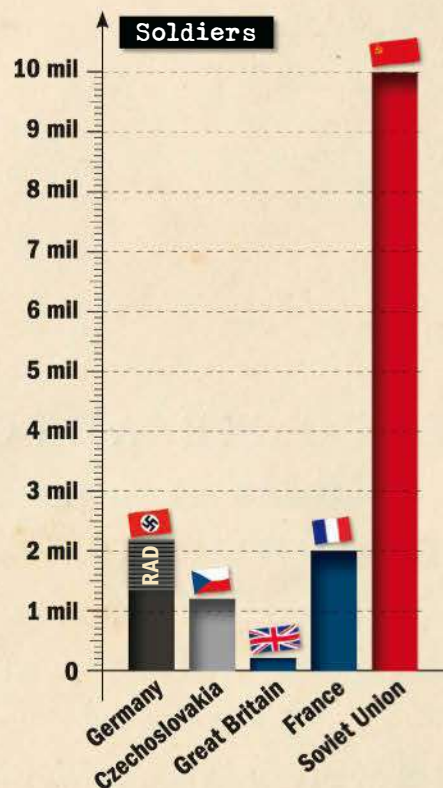
Despite a massive buildup, the German army in 1938 was not ready for war with Czechoslovakia, backed by France and the Soviet Union. The Munich agreement of 30th September gave Hitler the permission he needed from France and Britain to invade the Sudetenland and its occupation took place without a fight.

## The 1938 military forces



### German tanks were small

Germany's many tanks were lightly armed with machine guns and 37-mm guns, whilst the Czech tanks had 75-mm guns. Great Britain was not yet ready for war.

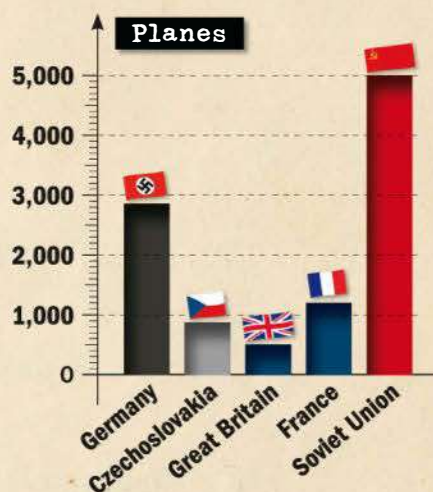


### Equal numbers of troops

Germany and Czechoslovakia had mobilised almost equal numbers of soldiers in 1938. The German army looked larger on paper, but around half of them were conscripts.



The Russians in 1937 promised the Czechs 60 new Tupolev bombers. These did not arrive until the Germans entered the country.



### Germany had new aircraft

The Luftwaffe had rapidly developed to give the Germans the most modern and the best-armed air force. The Soviet Union, however, was well underway to replacing its old aircraft with new ones and had promised Czechoslovakia planes too.



Germany's large armoured forces consisted mainly of small and lightly armed tanks.





THE DREAM OF THE THOUSAND-YEAR REICH

# ATTACK ON

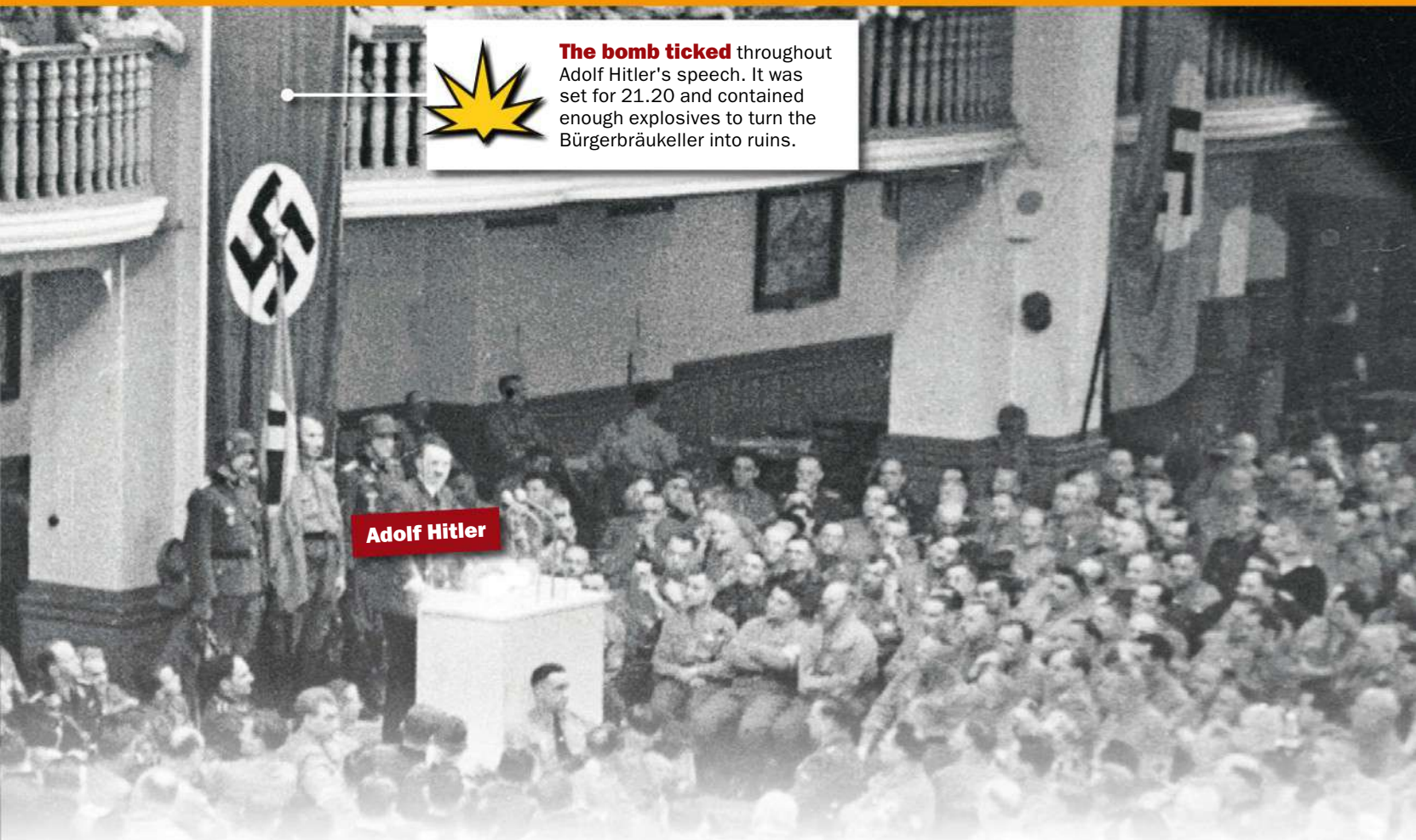


*Every year, on 8th November, Hitler spoke in the Bürgerbräukeller; Georg Elser decided to take advantage.*

MONTAGE: SZ-PHOTO/SCANPIX

# HITLER





**The bomb ticked** throughout Adolf Hitler's speech. It was set for 21.20 and contained enough explosives to turn the Bürgerbräukeller into ruins.

**Adolf Hitler**

BY STINE OVERBYE & TORSTEN WEPER

**I**n the busy Nazi accommodation office in Munich, stood a youthful looking man with large ears. Slender of stature, he didn't stand out, but while most of the others in the room were wearing uniform, this man simply wore a dark jacket.

No one noticed this detail. Everyone was impatiently trying to be assigned a room so they could attend that evening's major event: Hitler was due to speak to his 'old comrades' in Munich's great beer hall, the Bürgerbräukeller. And the following day, he was due to head a major memorial march.

The events took place on the anniversary of the Beer Hall Putsch, the Nazis' 1923 attempted military takeover. The coup ended in a massacre in which 16 Nazis were killed. Ever since, the fallen had been hailed as martyrs.

In the accommodation office, the party secretaries asked the visitors whether they'd been there in 1923. The large-eared man shook his head silently, regretting his absence at the attempted coup. He then introduced himself as Georg Elser, and politely thanked the secretary when given the address of a family who had a room available for Nazi guests.

At the family's home, Elser put down his suitcase and exchanged a few words with his host, before leaving at 20.00 to cross the River Isar to the Bürgerbräukeller. Here the streets were cordoned off and packed with onlookers, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Führer.

Nearly 3,000 Nazis had gathered inside the tightly packed beer hall. As he did every year on this day, 8th November, Adolf Hitler stepped up to the podium at exactly at 20.30, to the sound of thunderous applause

and euphoric cheers. For two hours, he spoke proudly about the greatness of Germany, and only when he finished his speech and left the beer hall at 22.30, could the roadblocks be removed.

As the crowds flocked home, Georg Elser seized the opportunity to sneak into the Bürgerbräukeller's empty hall. He looked around and noticed that it was built on two levels, and that behind the lectern hung a Nazi flag that hid a supporting column. Without knowing how he would manage it, Elser was in no doubt that Hitler would die in that room on 8th November the following year.

## Cabinetmaker's hatred

Georg Elser was born in 1903 and grew up in modest conditions in the southern German town of ►

## 1938-39 IN NAZI GERMANY

**Background:** Unlike most Germans, cabinetmaker Georg Elser saw through the Nazis, who had been in power since 1933. He believed they were a threat to peace.

**Plan:** For a year, Elser prepared his attack on Hitler in absolute secrecy.

**Result:** The Nazis couldn't understand how Elser had managed it. They were sure British agents were behind the plot. But neither interrogation nor torture could alter the fact that an ordinary cabinetmaker from the provinces was their most dangerous enemy.







Königsbronn. At school, he was good at maths and drawing, and when he became a cabinetmaker, Elser was a perfectionist. He liked to visit his customers the day after they received their furniture, just to check that everything was in order. In his spare time, Elser played the violin in a folk group, danced and experienced some success with girls. They fell for his cheerful yet shy nature – but something was brewing inside.

As kind and gentle as Elser was, he was passionate in his hatred of the Nazis, who had ruled the country since 1933. After Germany invaded the Sudetenland, a mountainous area of the Czech Republic, in the autumn of 1938, Elser was certain the Nazis wanted to propel the country into another Great War.

Elser wasn't particularly political, but he had signed up as a member of the Communist Party at one point, and had noticed the effect on his wallet that the difficult period of austerity following WWI had caused – the economic miracle Hitler prided himself hadn't filtered down to the working classes. Between 1928 and 1938, Elser calculated that his meagre hourly wage had halved.

However, the economy was not what really bothered Elser – it was oppression of any kind that he despised. He'd grown up with an overbearing, violent father, and his unstable childhood fed his hatred of tyrants. When

Elser heard Hitler talk on the radio, he left the room, and when the Nazis marched through the streets of his home town Königsbronn, he turned his back and started whistling to himself. He refused to do the Nazi salute and detested the Hitler Youth organisation. The threat of another Great War bothered him so much that in the autumn of 1938, he decided to take action.

### Plan of attack

Perfectionist Georg Elser began looking for the right place to carry out an attack. For an ordinary citizen, it was almost impossible to get close to Hitler, who often changed his plans at the last minute, and was constantly surrounded by a horde of bodyguards. But Elser learned from the newspapers that Hitler was 100 percent guaranteed to go to the Bürgerbräukeller each year to commemorate the Beer Hall Putsch.

Elser gave himself plenty of time – he'd rather prepare the attack thoroughly than risk failure. On the evening of 8th November 1938, he visited the beer hall for the first time, to inspect the killing ground, and the next day he took the train home to Königsbronn, where he racked his brain to devise the perfect assault.

"In the weeks that followed, I gradually worked out that it would be best to plant explosives in the column behind the speaker's podium and to detonate them with some sort of device at the right time. What the appliance should look like, I didn't know yet. I chose the column because the flying fragments in an explosion would hit the people at and around the lectern," Elser later explained.

He went to Munich again at Easter in 1939 to take a closer look at the beer hall and the column, which he measured while no one was looking. Around the same time, he got a new job – as a workman in the Königsbronn quarry. Here, he was not only able to gain experience with explosives, but also to steal charges for his bomb, which he hid in a suitcase beneath a false base.

Elser was a loner – he exchanged a few words every day with the family with whom he rented a room, of course, but his social circle was limited. Although he was in his mid-30s, Elser was neither married nor engaged – he was in love with a divorced woman, Else Härten, but the relationship was complicated, and Elser avoided including her in his plans at all cost.

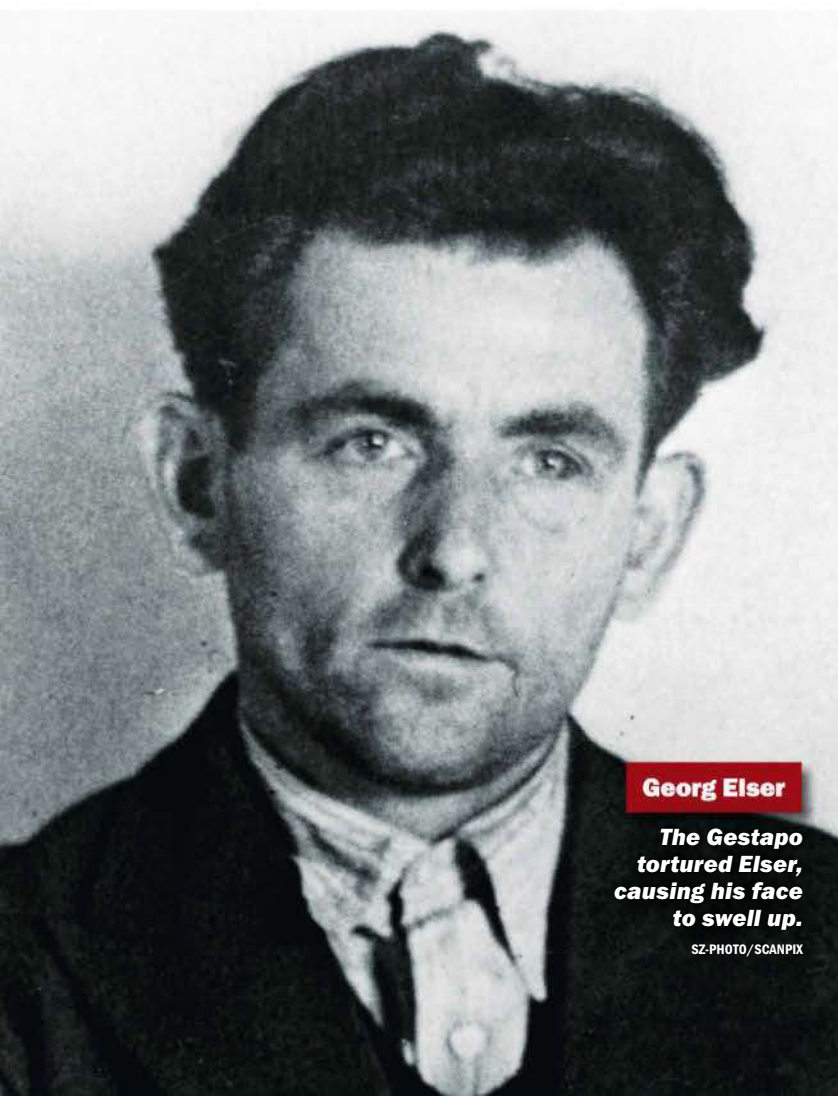
### Night shifts in Munich

In a short time, Elser managed to get all the explosive charges he needed, but after just three weeks in the quarry, there was an accident: a boulder fell on his foot, so he was forced to rest for several weeks, in plaster. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Elser had plenty of time to think during his convalescence. He spent the time working out exactly how to construct a timer for his bomb – or the infernal machine, as he thought of it. During this period, he was

***"For 300 years, England has fought for justice, and has been rewarded with 40 million square kilometres of land from God."***

Hitler's ironic speech about the British, Bürgerbräukeller, 1939



**Georg Elser**

**The Gestapo tortured Elser, causing his face to swell up.**

SZ-PHOTO/SCANPIX



able to draw on his five years of employment as a cabinetmaker at a watch factory during the 1920s.

He never returned to the quarry. To get money to live and to buy the parts he needed for the bomb, Elser sold his bike, his beloved violin and many more belongings.

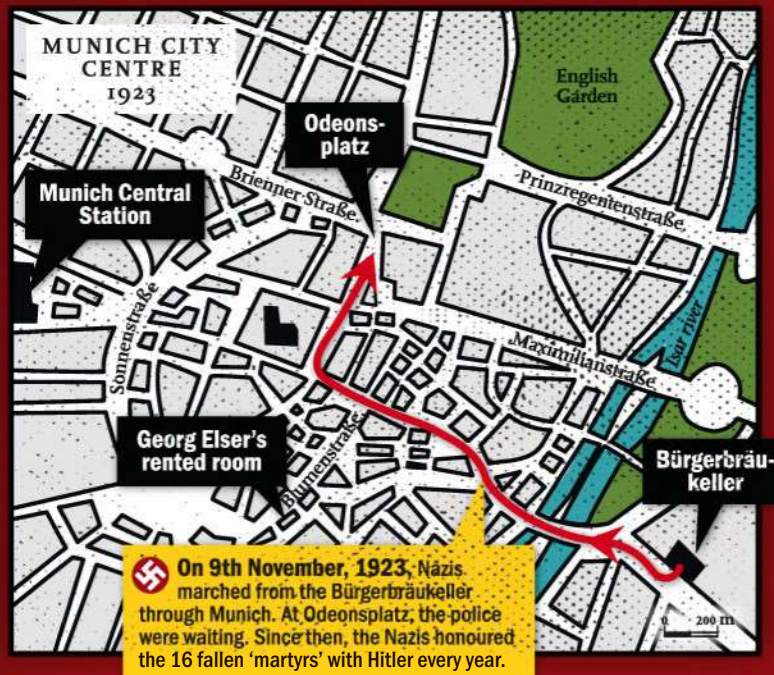
One August day in 1939, he took his suitcase, packed with explosives, on a train bound for Munich. In his pocket, he had around 400 Reichsmarks – enough money to last him several months. Breathless, Elser sat down and gazed out at the landscape. Without regret, he acknowledged that there was no way back now, and for the first time since Elser had made his decision, he felt a little impatient.

In Munich, Elser rented a room in Blumenstraße with the Baumann family, who asked their new lodger about his business in the city. Elser said he was training as a construction manager and working on an invention at night. They didn't need to enquire any further, because the explanation fitted with Elser's daily routine: he took breakfast with the Baumann family, then retired to his room, where he pursued his "invention" – a timer for his bomb. He slept for most of the afternoon, then towards 19.00, he left his room and walked to the Bürgerbräukeller, where he ate dinner, washed down with a beer.

At 22.00, he paid the bill and said goodnight to the staff, but instead of leaving the establishment, he sneaked into the large, empty hall and hid in an adjoining storage room. Here, he waited patiently for the staff to shut everything up, and when he was finally alone, he began his night's work. Early in the morning, before the first employees arrived, he dashed out of the emergency exit at the back of the building and hurried home for breakfast with the Baumann family.

### Toilets muffled noise

The task that Elser had undertaken was demanding. In the beam from his torch, which he had covered in a ►



## Putsch honoured every year

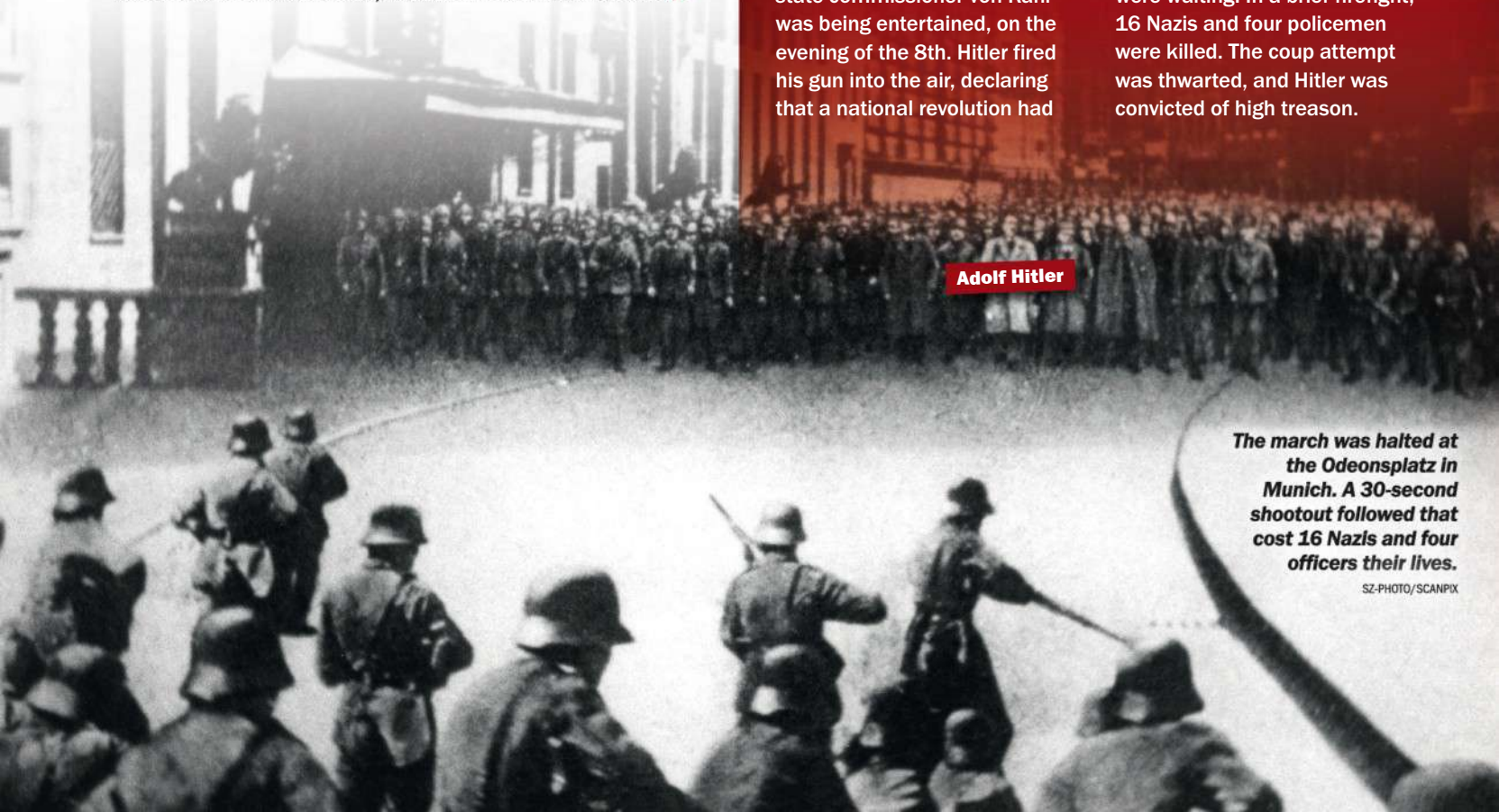
In 1923, Hitler tried to take power in Munich by means of a coup. It failed and 16 Nazis were killed.

The 8th and 9th of November were two of the Nazis' most important anniversaries – the dates of the failed coup, known as the Beer Hall Putsch, which took place in Munich in 1923.

With a crowd of Nazis, Hitler stormed the Bürgerbräukeller beer hall where the Bavarian state commissioner von Kahr was being entertained, on the evening of the 8th. Hitler fired his gun into the air, declaring that a national revolution had

broken out. Everyone in the hall promised to back him, but he was betrayed, and the police and government were alerted.

At noon the following day, the Nazis embarked on a march through the city as a demonstration of power, but at the Odeonsplatz, the police were waiting. In a brief firefight, 16 Nazis and four policemen were killed. The coup attempt was thwarted, and Hitler was convicted of high treason.







# Infernal machine was a technical marvel

Two separate clocks would ensure that the bomb went off at exactly the right time. The timers gave Elser six days to escape.

**G**eorg Elser had no knowledge about making bombs with timer mechanisms when he decided to kill Hitler. But being a skilled craftsman, he envisioned a solution in which a clock triggered a spring that, with a nail, struck an ordinary gun cartridge, thus igniting the explosives.

He had already mastered the technique in the summer of 1939, but he built the final detonator in his rented room in Munich several months later.

For weeks, he experimented with his trigger mechanism. He had two clocks from his job as a

cabinetmaker at a watch factory. The clocks could be set to go off six days after they were started. He tested the homemade trigger in his father's apple garden outside Königsbrunn. His father asked no questions.



**Completely silent.** The clocks were put in an asphalt-lined box to muffle the ticking.

**Extra security.** Georg Elser designed a two-timer trigger mechanism.

**The trigger.** The clocks triggered a spring that knocked a nail into a rifle cartridge, which ignited the explosion.

*In captivity, Elser built a replica of the bomb's trigger to prove he had worked alone in his crime.*

handkerchief to dim the light, he sawed away at a piece of wooden panelling at the column's base. It took him three nights to transform the wood into a door that could be closed by hinges to blend in with the panelling.

"Even if someone had looked at the column very closely during the day, he wouldn't have noticed any change at all," Elser noted.

Kneeling on his increasingly sore knees, he began to carve a cavity into the column, but the noise from his hammer rang out so deafeningly in the dark room that he had to make holes in the mortar with a hand drill instead, so that he could scrape the mortar out with a chisel. Only when a tram passed by in the street outside or when the beer hall's urinals flushed automatically every ten minutes did he dare to bang the chisel into the column for a few seconds.

Each strike of the chisel sent his heart racing, and Elser waited with his breath held, expecting the night watchman to catch him. In fact, the guard did check the beer hall at night, but he never went up to the gallery.

Elser later admitted that there was one occasion when he could have been discovered – he arrived one evening to discover the work trousers he'd left behind that morning neatly folded in the corner of the empty hall.

Despite this fright, Elser continued night after night. Only at daybreak did he pack away his tools and tidy up, taking care not to leave the slightest trace. Every grain of dust was swept up. Before leaving the hall, he carefully closed the wooden door. Being a skilled craftsman, he'd fitted it with a lock, so it wouldn't open accidentally.

Over three months, Elser spent more than 30 nights in the beer hall, until 2nd November 1939, when he was

finally able to place the explosives in the cavity. Two nights later, it was time to take the detonator to the hall – two modified clock mechanisms that were designed to set the bomb off. However, that evening a dance was taking place, so Elser had to buy a ticket and wait.

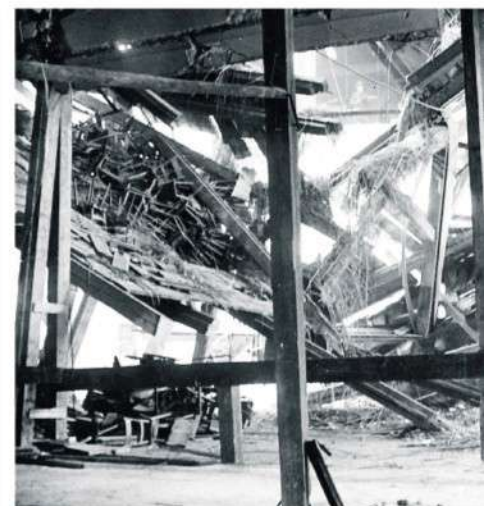
## The bomb was too big

"I took a seat in the gallery near the music podium, and watched the dance from there. At the end of the dance, around 01.00, I went to my hiding place," he explained.

When Elser finally stood in front of the column in the empty beer hall, he discovered, to his great dismay, that the hole that he had carved out was too small for the timer he had constructed.

Regretfully, Elser had to close the door and leave the Bürgerbräukeller, but on the night of 6th November, he returned. Using a saw and a file, he had trimmed the box that housed the timer, and it now fitted perfectly. Elser set the clock, so the bomb would go off at 21.20 on 8th November 1939.

He picked that time because, Hitler



*The bomb was so powerful that the building had to be strengthened with beams. The police found numerous cogs at the scene.*



always stepped up to the podium at 20.30 during the commemoration of the Beer Hall Putsch, after which he spoke for several hours.

He covered the clocks to muffle their ticking, closed the door in the panelling, and felt a wave of relief as he left the beer hall at 06.00.

He decided to celebrate by buying a cup of coffee at a kiosk, and while enjoying the hot drink in the cool autumn morning, he rejoiced at the thought that the bomb had begun ticking.

"It must succeed," he assured himself in a whisper. If everything went to plan, the bomb would explode in 60 hours, and by then, Elser intended to be on the other side of the Alps mountain range. His plan was to take the train to the southern German city of Konstanz, and escape unseen across the border to Switzerland.

## Interrupted escape

While Hitler prepared his speech and the Bürgerbräukeller staff got ready for the festivities, Georg Elser reached Stuttgart, where his sister, Maria, lived. Instead of going straight to Switzerland, he chose to spend the day visiting family – and then he made a decision: the perfectionist craftsman wanted to go back to the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich to check if everything was OK, and the clocks were still working as intended.

"Because I had finished installing the clocks two days later than I had originally planned, I was anxious to check whether they had stopped," Elser told the interrogators. "After I had installed, restarted and reset the clocks on 6th November, I had only half an hour before I had to leave the hall. But I wanted to be safe, which is why I went back to Munich."

The problem was that he had used all the 400 Reichsmarks he had managed to scrape together, but Maria lent him 30 more without question.

When Elser reached the Bürgerbräukeller on the evening of 7th November, he hid once more in the storage room until closing time, then opened the door in

the column and inspected the two clocks. They were ticking, just as they should have been.

At 06.30, he left the beer hall for the last time. He strolled through the town and bought another cup of coffee before visiting his old host family, the Baumanns.

At 10.00, he finally went to the train station, where he began his escape.

As Elser boarded the train, he had no idea that the outbreak of war had forced Hitler to change his plans. The invasion of Poland had been a success, but the Nazis

had further ideas for Europe: a campaign against France was in preparation. This meant the programme for the Beer Hall Putsch celebrations had to be changed so that Hitler could return to host a war cabinet in Berlin the following morning.

Unfortunately, the weather forecast warned of thick fog over Munich, and Hitler's pilot couldn't guarantee that they would be able to fly back to Berlin again that same night.

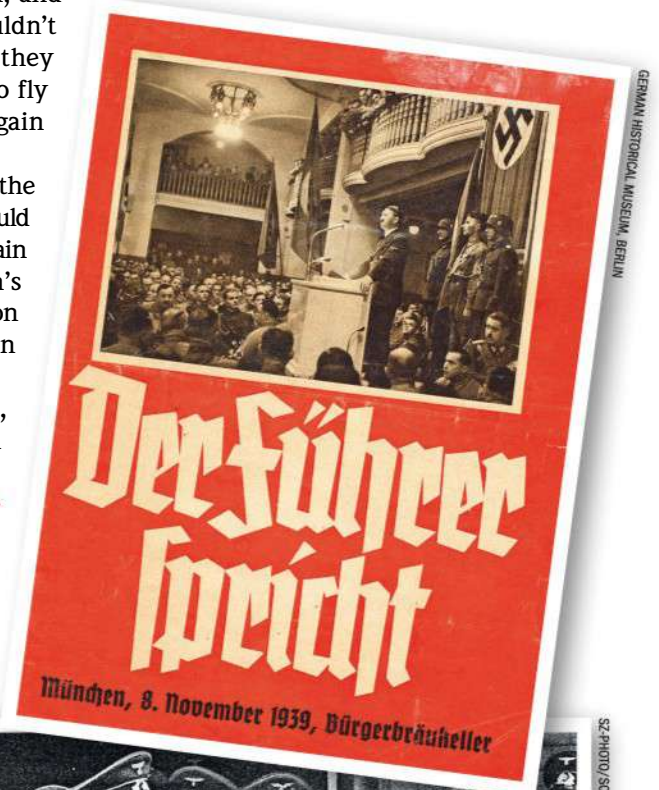
Instead, after the speech, Hitler would have to board a train leaving Munich's main train station at 21.31 on 8th November.

As a result, Hitler stepped up to the lectern at 20.00 – half ▶

**"The Führer speaks" read the invitation to Nazi veterans.**

***"When has there ever been a people more vilely lied to and tricked than the Germans by the English in the past two decades?"***

Hitler on the motives of the Germans, Bürgerbräukeller, 1939



52 PHOTO/SCANPIX & SHUTTERSTOCK



52 PHOTO/SCANPIX

Hitler arrived unharmed in Berlin, where he was greeted by concerned party members and military men, including commander-in-chief of the air force Hermann Göring.





an hour earlier than in previous years. Earnestly, he told the crowd of the necessity of war against the British, who claimed to fight for freedom, while themselves taking country after country. With biting irony, Hitler scolded the British, who thought they were in charge while Germany was cheated and deceived.

Each statement was met with cheers from the 3,000 or so assembled party members. The atmosphere in the beer hall was electric.

In less than an hour, Hitler finished his speech, and while the applause was still roaring, he and his Nazi entourage rushed to the waiting cars.

As Hitler took his leave from the Bürgerbräukeller, others followed. The majority of guests thronged towards the exit, and then – exactly 13 minutes after Hitler left the hall – Elser's bomb exploded with a muffled boom. The powerful pressure wave knocked over the hundreds of remaining guests, and the supporting column behind Hitler's lectern shattered, so that parts of the ceiling collapsed into a cloud of dust.

Eight Nazis perished under the rubble and another 67 were severely wounded.

## Interrogation and torture by Gestapo

At 20.45, half an hour before the bomb blast in Munich, a slender man with large ears was arrested by German border guards in Konstanz, a few metres from the border with Switzerland.

The guards suspected the man of being a smuggler. They searched his belongings expecting to find the type of goods usually transported across the border: alcohol, cigarettes and sausages, but instead the guards found that his backpack contained a stack of crumpled papers



HEINRICH HOFMANN/BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY

containing notes on bomb making, a postcard of the Bürgerbräukeller, a communist badge, a small tool, a clock spring and some pieces of metal.

The contents of the backpack mystified the border guards, but shortly after receiving a telex about the attempted attack on Hitler, they put two and two together. They took Georg Elser to Munich and handed him over to the Gestapo, who subjected him to interminable interrogations.

Elser claimed that he had wanted to visit an acquaintance in the town but couldn't find the right house in the dark. When the officers said that a Bürgerbräukeller employee had identified him as one of the beer hall's regulars, he admitted to frequenting the place, but denied any knowledge of an attack.

After a few hours, the investigation at the scene revealed that the bomb had been placed in the column near the floor, which meant that the perpetrator must have been kneeling while hollowing out the column – and the Gestapo used that information during the interrogations.

The officer commanded Elser to take off his trousers. For a moment, Elser hesitated. He was nervous and





confused, and didn't quite understand what was going on.

"It's about your knees!" the interrogator roared.

Instead of getting undressed, Elser slowly pulled up his trouser legs, and as his knees appeared, the Gestapo officer immediately noticed: they were swollen and sore.

"Do you have anything to say to me now?"

"If someone did something like that, what should he expect?" Elser asked fearfully.

He knew the answer: torture, interrogation and more torture. Elser quickly confessed, but the Gestapo and the SS were convinced that he must have had co-conspirators – an ordinary cabinetmaker from Königsbronn could not have been behind such a devastating attack.

## Himmler lost patience

On 9th November – the day after the bomb blast – the Gestapo arrested two British agents at the Dutch border. According to Hitler and the rest of the Nazi high command, there was no doubt that they must have been the real culprits behind the attack – Elser was just Britain's stooge. The *Völkischer Beobachter* newspaper, the voice of the Nazi Party, identified the villains without hesitation. "The instigators...are agents of the secret service," the paper stated, warning that "England shall get to know us."

Elser was tortured several times, but because the abuse failed to make him confess to working with the British agents, SS chief Heinrich Himmler stepped in. Together with an aide, he whipped and kicked Elser, who howled in pain as blood flowed from his nose and mouth. But no matter how much he suffered, he was adamant that he had acted on his own.

"I considered on my own how the circumstances of the workers could be improved and a war avoided...I concluded that the circumstances in Germany could only be changed through an elimination of the current leadership...that is, Hitler, Göring and Goebbels," he explained.

After Elser had been in the Gestapo's hands for a number of weeks, he was transferred to Sachsenhausen concentration camp outside Berlin, where he was the camp's most heavily guarded prisoner. He hadn't been convicted of any crime, for Hitler's plan was to keep him out of the way in a cell until the war was over, then he'd be used as a witness in a show trial against the British, where he would help prove – in the Führer's words – "the perfidious methods the secret service has employed".

But Georg Elser never went to court. The war continued, and at the end of 1944, he was transferred to Dachau concentration camp near Munich, and locked inside cell number six. By then, he was a mere shadow of himself, a skeletal, broken man with grey hair, sunken cheeks and hollow, lifeless eyes.

In the last days of the war, the camp commander received an order from the head of the Gestapo to execute Georg Elser. On the night of 10th April, 1945, he was taken to the camp's crematorium, killed with a gunshot, and his body immediately burned.

He was just 13 minutes away from changing the course of history – instead, Elser became one of the 55 million civilians killed in the war. ■

# The hero no one knew about

After World War II, Georg Elser's assassination attempt was forgotten. Only in the 1990s did his story emerge.

Claus von Stauffenberg, Sophie Scholl and very few others – the list of Germans who opposed Nazism is short. Those who did were feted as heroes after the war – but not Elser. He was forgotten for decades. This was for several reasons:

## The church accused Elser of being in the SS

Georg Elser believed in God, but he didn't go to church. That was reprehensible in the eyes of Christians. Worse, however, was the fact that prominent German theologian Martin Niemöller spread the SS's lies about Elser.

Niemöller was a prisoner in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp at the same time as Elser. The theologian chatted with the guards, who claimed Elser had carried out his attack **on orders from the SS**. Their motive was supposedly so that Hitler would appear immortal.

## West German hatred of Communists

After World War II, Elser's home town of Königsbronn was in West Germany, where **the Communist Party was banned**. As Elser was a Communist, he was unacceptable as a West German hero.

## GDR denied him

The Communist German Democratic Republic didn't hail Elser as a hero either. He had carried out the attack on his own, **without the party's knowledge**.

## Town turned its back

After the 1939 attack, the residents of Königsbronn were questioned by the **Gestapo, who tortured several of them**. Others were sent to the front as punishment. The

Nazis also mocked the town by calling it 'Attentatshausen', assassination house. The townsfolk felt like **victims of Elser**, and it wasn't until the 1990s that they put up a commemorative plaque.

## Nazis never forgave him

Many Nazis reintegrated into civilian life after the war. Karl Burr, Königsbronn's mayor from 1951 to 1989, had been educated at a Nazi school, and he suppressed any recognition of Elser.

**In 2011, Berlin finally put up a memorial to Elser. The 17-metre sculpture stands in Wilhelmstrasse, near the Führer's bunker.**

LIENHARD SCHULZ







*Hitler was the rock star of his age. Guards had to protect the Nazi leader from people who fought to touch their idol.*





# HITLER IS THE NEW MESSIAH

Adolf Hitler was not just Germany's head of state. The Nazi leader was seen as a demigod by his people. The cult that surrounded the Führer was the result of a deliberate strategy that made him central to the lives of ordinary Germans.







Hitler has everything it takes to become Germany's new strongman: charisma, eloquence and confidence. But he needs someone who can transform him into a credible hero. Joseph Goebbels proves to be the right man for the job and soon manipulates Hitler's image, so that Germans begin to revere the Führer as a demigod.

**I**N THE EARLY HOURS OF 30TH SEPTEMBER 1938, the heads of state from Germany, France, Britain and Italy signed the Munich Agreement, which ceded Sudetenland in Western Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany and enabled its leader to bring large areas of German-speaking peoples "back home to the Reich". A few hours later, the agreement was made public and within days German tanks rolled across the border into Czechoslovakia.

In the eyes of the German people, Hitler had done it again. Through statesmanship, the Führer had outmanoeuvred other European leaders and rescued a large German minority – and all without a war.

Hitler's triumph was no surprise to most Germans. Since he'd entered the political scene, the little man with the big voice had enjoyed a string of successes, and many regarded him as infallible. Hitler's strong persona met a need in a population hit by economic hardship, growing unemployment and widespread despair.

"We long for the Leader. He should show us the way," wrote one German writer in the 1920s. Another described this mythical figure as "hard, straightforward and ruthless... He carries out the will of God".

Hitler had long been preparing himself to become such a leader. In 1919, he joined the German Worker's Party (DAP),

which changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) while keeping its nationalist, anti-Jewish programme. Rapidly Hitler rose to become party spokesman, making his name as a skilled orator with a magnetic personality.

### HITLER BECAME THE FÜHRER

In 1921, Hitler became supreme leader of the Nazi Party, and shortly after adopted the title *Führer* (leader or father). This fitted with the image that many in the party had already begun to cultivate of the demagogue as a saviour. Enthusiasm was widespread, particularly in Munich where the Nazi movement had originated. For the same reason, the young party chose Munich to launch its coup against the Weimar Republic in November 1923. But the coup failed, the NSDAP was banned, and Hitler was sentenced to five years in prison for high treason.

The aspiring statesman used his stay in prison to write the book *Mein Kampf*, where he took on the role of redeemer and explained how he would lead Germany to renewed greatness by exterminating Jews and capturing large areas to the east.

Hitler was released several years ahead of time in December 1924, managing to avoid deportation back to his native Austria, which had been considered at one point. In February 1925, the NSDAP resumed, and Hitler emerged as the man to rescue

Germany. The party leader's messages could not have come at a better time in an out-of-kilter Germany. Hitler spoke directly to the hearts of both working and middle classes with his strong nationalist, anti-communist and anti-Jewish views.

Foreign journalists weren't blind to the new political phenomenon in Germany. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Evening Post*, American journalist and author Hubert Renfro Knickerbocker wrote that: "Hitler is a cork. He

*In 1938, Austrians were overjoyed when Hitler made the country of his birth part of the Third Reich.*





# Nazism was everywhere

Adulation for Hitler assumed an almost religious aspect. The leader's face and Nazi symbols were used throughout German society.



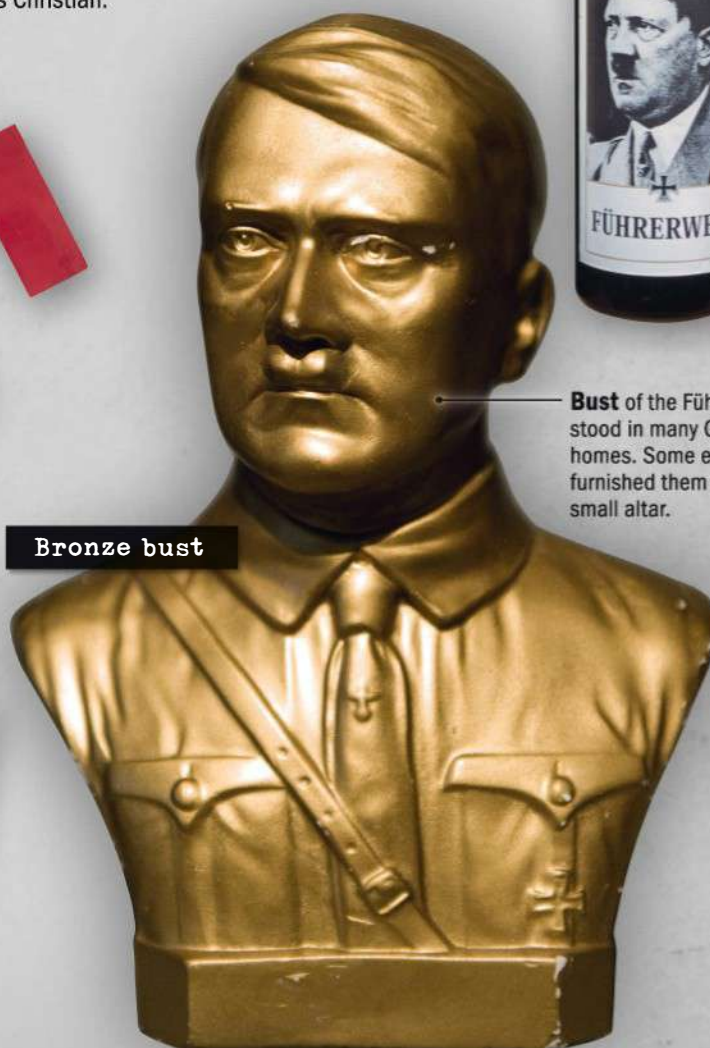
Swastika-themed **Christmas tree** ornaments and stands were a deliberate attempt to make Christmas more Nazi and less Christian.



**Tie** with swastikas for private use. Official party ties were more sombre.



**Stamps** with Hitler's image were widespread, and special issues were released for anniversaries.



**Bronze bust**

**Führerwein** was specially produced. It's believed that Hitler ordered a box for his birthday in 1943.



**Bust** of the Führer stood in many German homes. Some even furnished them with a small altar.

OBJECTS

floats on the crest of every wave of popular sentiment. No man in Germany can smell the trend of mass feeling and respond to it as Hitler can."

Hitler was well aware that eloquence alone was not enough. Until about 1930, he was mostly feted by party members. Modern propaganda techniques were required to sell the image of a new saviour to the entire nation, and Joseph Goebbels with his PhD in literature was the man to do it.

Shortly after he'd met Hitler for the first time, Goebbels wrote in his diary: "That man's got everything to be a king: a popular leader born and bred."

Goebbels' strategy from the beginning was to strengthen the notion of Hitler as a saviour who from humble beginnings had risen to fill his natural position as Germany's redeemer.

One story told repeatedly was how Hitler with a few, but faithful, disciples had held to his cause despite imprisonment and resistance.

## GERMANY'S MESSIAH CAME FROM THE SKY

As part of the campaign launch, the Nazis also stood for election in the Weimar Republic, where Goebbels agitated via public meetings and posters. At the elections in July 1932 he launched the "Hitler over Germany" campaign, where Hitler flew to 20 cities in six days and spoke to millions of Germans. The symbolism of Hitler landing by plane was unmistakable: the Messiah was descending from heaven to his people.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Goebbels had almost unlimited opportunities to promote Hitler. As ►





Alexandria, Egypt  
21st November 1938

I know that you are a great, powerful figure, and that I am only an insignificant woman who lives in a distant foreign land, out of which we may perhaps not be allowed to travel... Everything has been illuminated by such a great love, the love for my Leader, my teacher, that I sometimes would like to die, while I have your picture in front of me, so that I might no longer see what is not you... I have no God but you.

Barber Curt Rudolf  
Kempe dreamed of  
cutting Hitler's hair.

Baroness Else Hagen von  
Kilvein worshipped Hitler.

Seiffen, Germany  
4th April 1935

I would like to ask very politely if it is possible that I could come to Berlin and see our Leader... and might it be possible that at the same time I could also cut his hair? I am a professional hairdresser... It would be for me the happiest moment of my life if this were also possible.

## The Führer was deluged by German fan mail

Many people wrote to Hitler to express their admiration and even love. The Führer inspired a fanatical zeal among his followers.

**F**or many Germans, Hitler was not just an everyday man with good leadership skills, but a demigod. The Führer received around 12,000 fan letters a year, written by people from all walks of life. Some asked for advice, others sent gifts, and others just wanted to convey the extent to which the Führer had enriched their lives.

The letters were seized by Russian troops in Berlin after Germany's surrender in 1945 and taken to Moscow, but have since been made public.

Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, he controlled all forms of communication: newspapers, books, magazines, radio and film. Anything that might be perceived as a threat to the regime was subject to effective censorship. At the same time, Goebbels decided that artists and writers who expressed themselves publicly should be members of the Reich Chamber of Culture. And membership required acceptance of Nazi ideals.

Writers and artists soon felt the government's iron grip. All negative publicity of Hitler was banned, and special courts

*In films such as The Triumph of the Will, Leni Riefenstahl helped build the image of Hitler as a superhuman.*



were set up to punish violations. At the same time, Nazis wiretapped phones and opened letters to curb any criticism.

Foreign journalists were both intimidated and impressed in equal measure. Negative publicity led to travel bans within Germany, but less critical reporters were invited to the annual parades, where Hitler was worshipped by the masses. In 1934, US journalist William L Shirer witnessed an appearance at the annual rally in Nuremberg:

"Like a Roman emperor, Hitler rode into this medieval town at sundown today past solid phalanxes of wildly cheering Nazis who packed the narrow streets."

Shortly afterwards, Shirer found himself in the crowd that screamed, "We want our Führer!"

"They looked up at him as if he were a Messiah, their faces transformed into something positively inhuman. If he had remained in sight for more than a few moments, I think many of the women would have swooned from excitement," he reported home via the Universal Service news agency.

And the messianic idea was eagerly bought by ordinary citizens: "The realisation of my ideal could happen through only one man, Adolf Hitler", wrote one party member. "The rebirth of Germany can only be done by a man born not in palaces, but in a cottage."

## MOVIES ENHANCED THE LEADER'S IMAGE

Belief in Hitler as the nation's saviour spread throughout the Third Reich. Gradually, people even began to attach divine powers to the Führer. Some created shrines with busts and pictures of Hitler where the family laid gifts and flowers. In many cities, people planted "Hitler trees", while on the Führer's birthday on 20th April, the streets were filled each year with parades, while signs and banners offered congratulations to the people's chancellor. In Munich, shopkeepers adorned their windows with Hitler busts draped with laurel wreaths.

Goebbels' propaganda ministry poured yet more fuel on to the fire by allowing Germans to witness the Führer in theatres. Filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl produced *Triumph of the Will*, an unreserved, 90-minute tribute to Adolf Hitler and Nazism's greatness.

The film showed Hitler arriving from the clouds, descending to earth in his plane. It built up an almost religious narrative that culminated with thousands of people shouting "Sieg Heil" to welcome their leader. Over 20 million Germans went to the cinema to be seduced by the film.

When Hitler's status as a demigod was set, the task was to maintain the image. Therefore, from 1936 Hitler began to withdraw from domestic policy-making to avoid being associated with unpopular decisions that could pierce his bubble of infallibility. In the eyes of his people, he would be above everyday politics and would instead focus on establishing the framework of the country's future and celebrating foreign policy triumphs.

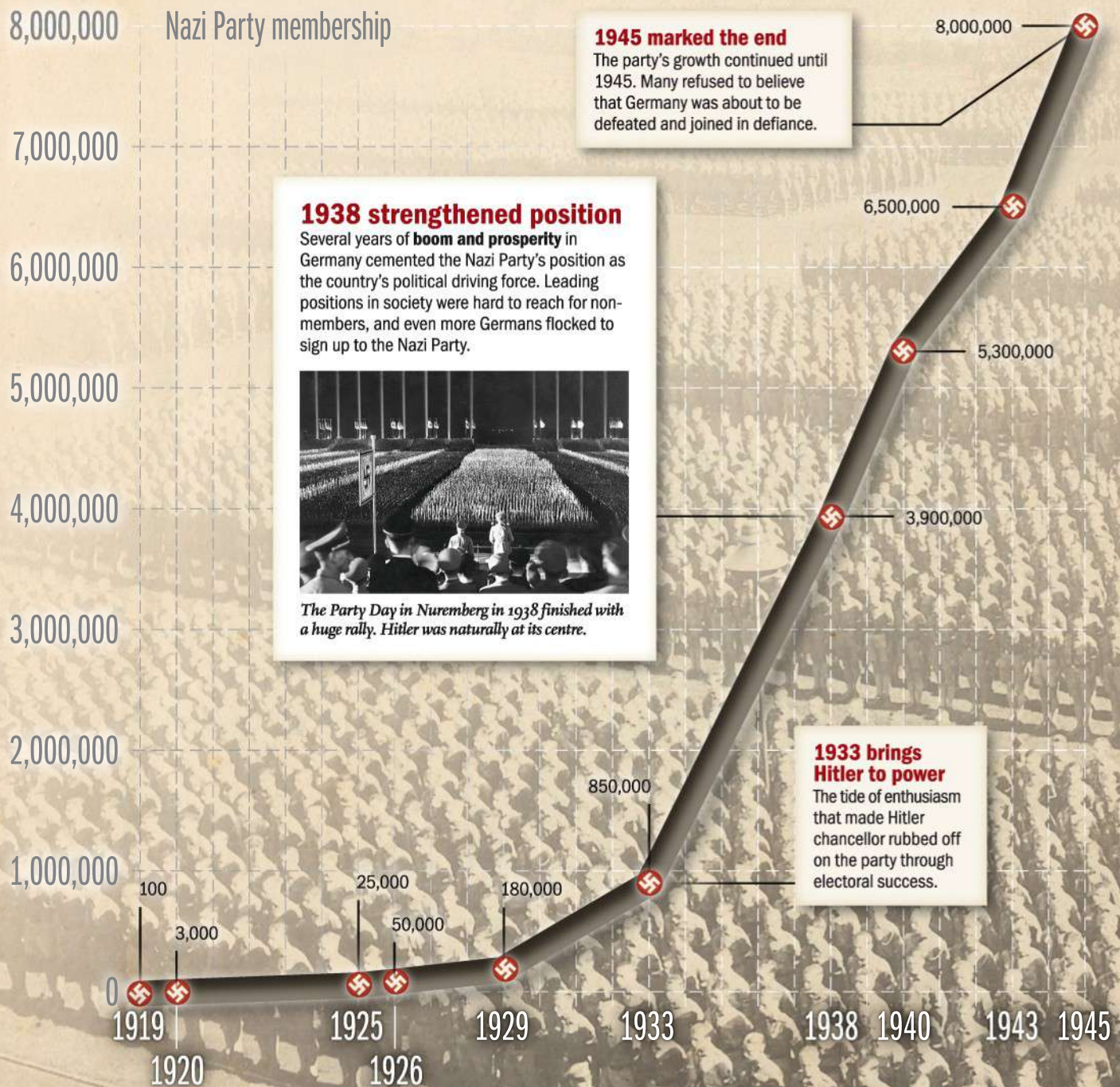
Hitler's last major public appearance was in 1940 after the victory over France. As the campaign against the Soviet Union began to go wrong, Hitler no longer appeared at large gatherings and withdrew from public speaking.

The result was that even while people increasingly became aware that the war was being lost, Hitler preserved his unique status among the population. The majority of Germans were therefore deeply shocked when, in April 1945, they learned that their Messiah had taken his own life. ■



# Cult status helped party win

Hitler's personal popularity lifted the Nazis to power. Millions of Germans followed their leader and joined the Nazi Party. From modest beginnings in 1919 as the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers Party), the movement continued to grow until the end of the war, by which time it had eight million members.



## NSDAP LASTED 25 YEARS

- NSDAP, aka the Nazi Party, was founded on 24th February 1920. It was a continuation of the DAP, which was itself founded in 1919.
- The Nazi Party stood in a series of elections. Its best result came in March 1933 when the NSDAP won 43.9 percent of the vote.
- Saluting with the right arm was the Nazi Party's official greeting.
- Women had their own branch of the Nazi Party: NS-Frauenschaft. Two million women signed up to become members.

FACT

Parades helped project an image of power and greatness.





**WHO WAS THE REAL  
ADOLF HITLER?**

# VEGETARIAN AND ASCETIC

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While Hitler was happy to order the mass murder of millions of people, he didn't believe in the slaughter of animals for human consumption. His diet was strictly vegetarian and – out of fear of assassination – tasted first by servants. Take a peek into Hitler's private chambers where he admitted a select circle of loyal supporters, his mistress, and their two dogs.

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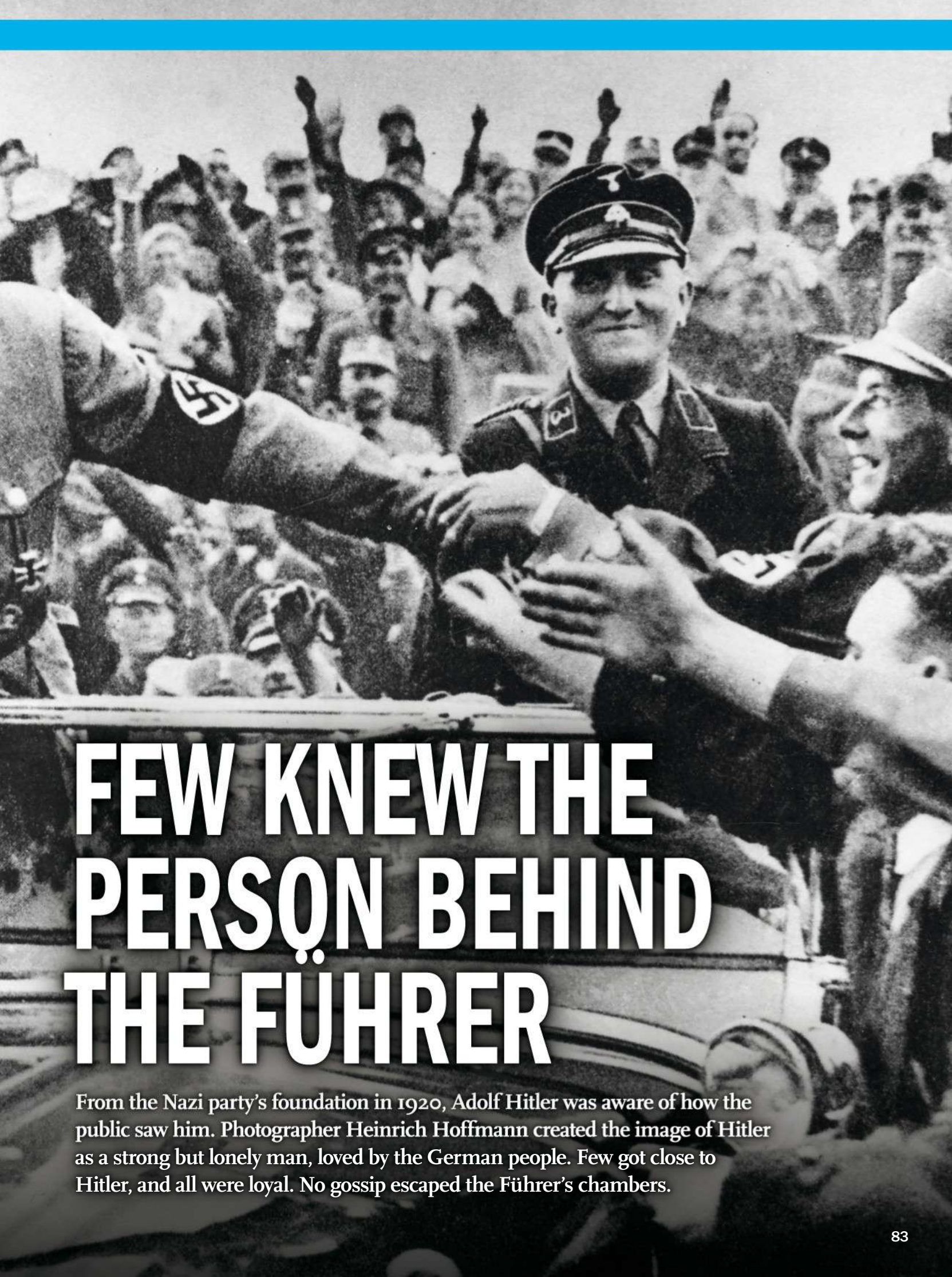




*Despite assassination fears,  
Hitler left the rallies at  
Nuremberg in the middle of  
a crowd of supporters.*



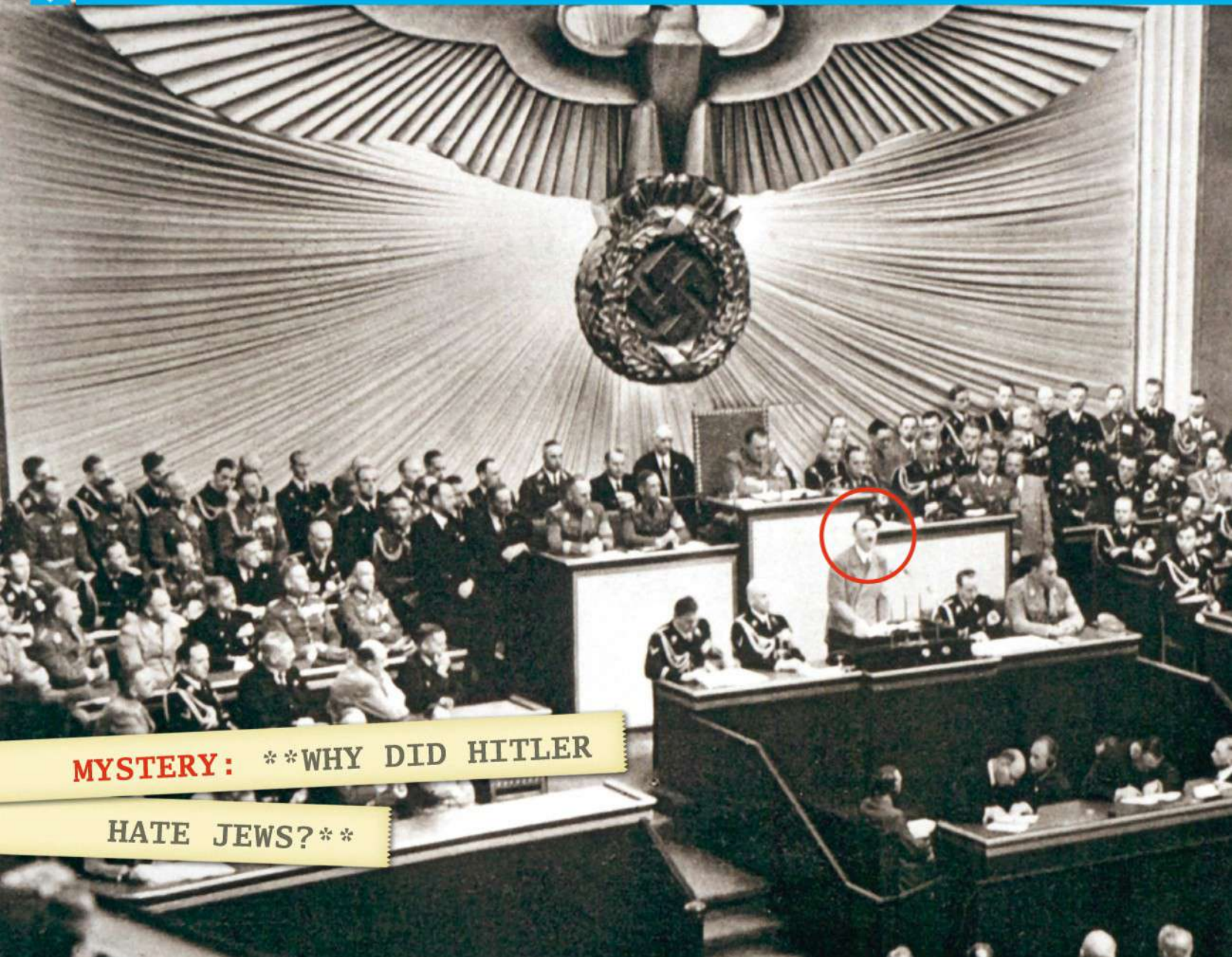




# FEW KNEW THE PERSON BEHIND THE FÜHRER

From the Nazi party's foundation in 1920, Adolf Hitler was aware of how the public saw him. Photographer Heinrich Hoffmann created the image of Hitler as a strong but lonely man, loved by the German people. Few got close to Hitler, and all were loyal. No gossip escaped the Führer's chambers.





**MYSTERY: \*\*WHY DID HITLER  
HATE JEWS? \*\***

The Jewish race in Europe would be eradicated if international Jewish financiers both inside and outside Europe succeeded in plunging the nations into another world war, Adolf Hitler roared from his rostrum in the German parliament on 30th January, 1939.



In *Mein Kampf* Hitler spoke about his political awakening, and how he would transform Germany into a pure-bred empire.

## JEW HATRED

### Defeat led to the Holocaust

Hitler was convinced that only a pure Germany built on conservative German values could regain its former glory. Historians believe his belief was rooted in Germany's defeat in World War I, the revolution in the war's final year that overthrew the monarchy, and the crisis of the 1920s that led to unemployment and hunger. Hitler believed these disasters were due to a conspiracy by Bolsheviks and Jewish financiers. Large popular nationalist movements emerged in the interwar period when the Weimar Republic struggled to solve Germany's problems. After his release in 1925, Hitler seized the opportunity and pulled together the various nationalist movements into the Nazi party.





**The Eternal Jew** was an exhibition in 1937 that toured in German libraries. The exhibition portrayed Jews as a race of offenders in collusion with world communism.

From 1941, the yellow star was worn by Jews in Germany and German-occupied territories.

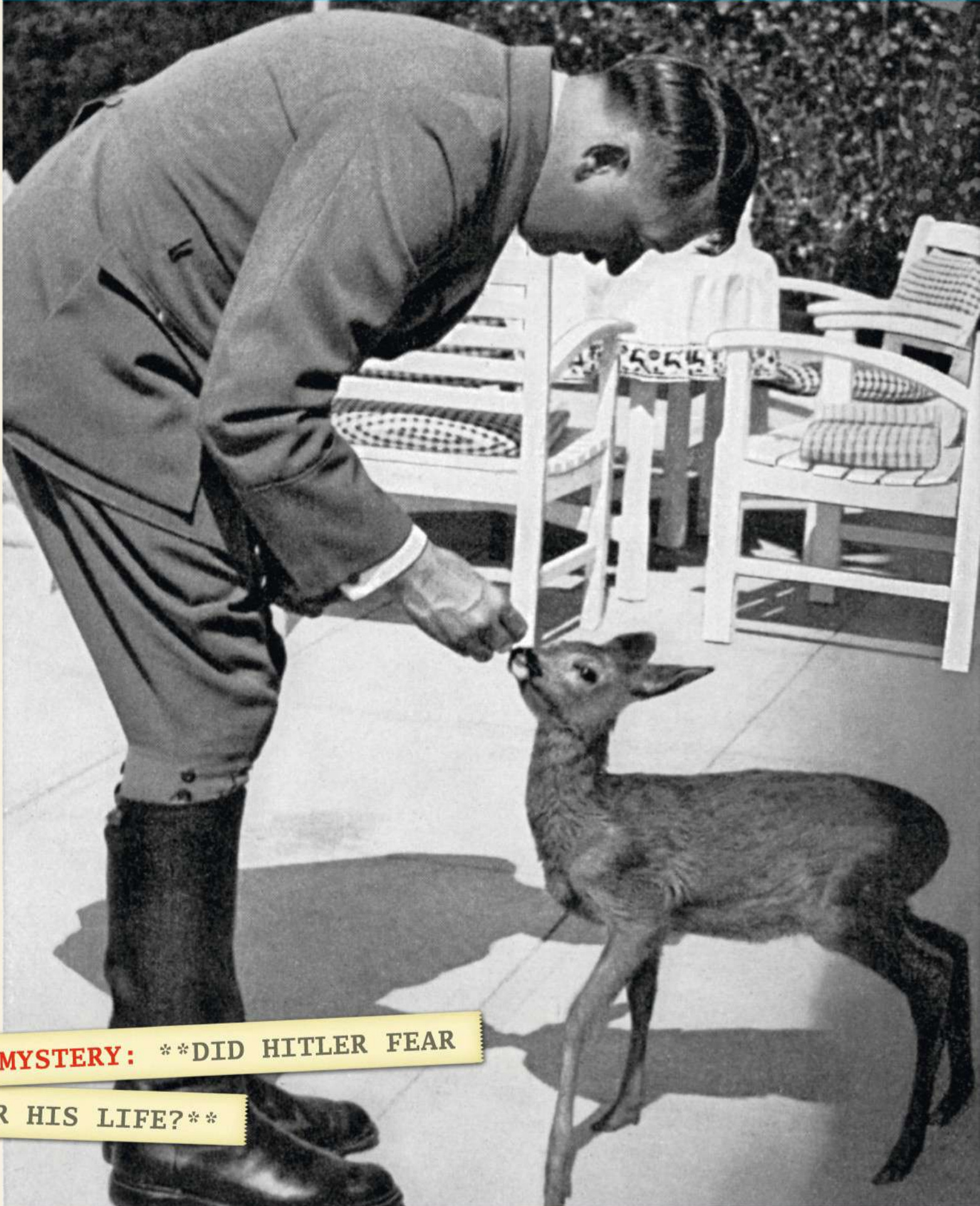


**The campaign against German Jews** began after Hitler seized power in 1933 with the boycott of Jewish shops and mass layoffs of, for example, Jewish doctors, teachers and civil servants.



**Hitler saw the revolution in Munich in 1918-19** at close quarters, and he was convinced that a group of Jewish intellectuals played a leading role. Hitler also believed that the revolt led to Germany being humiliated by the peace agreement following World War I.





**MYSTERY: \*\*DID HITLER FEAR  
FOR HIS LIFE?\*\***

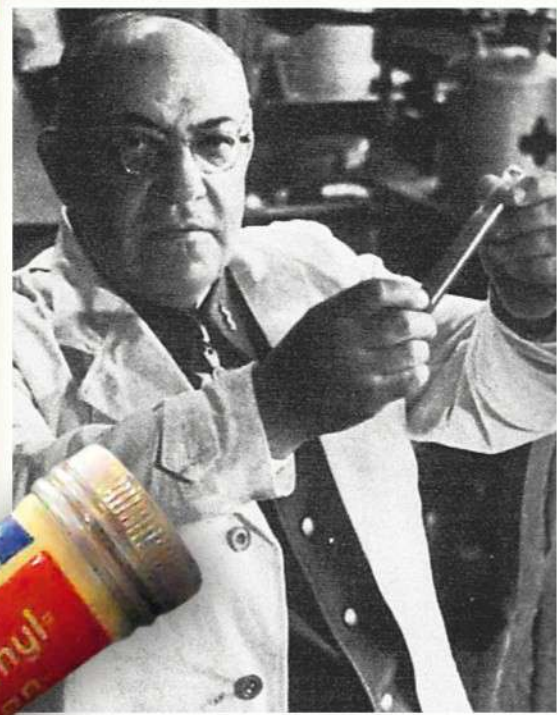
*The Führer feeding a faun on the terrace is one of the subjects of a series of trading cards that Germans found in cigarette packs in 1933. Whenever Hitler posed for publicity photos or for Eva Braun's album, he wore a jacket because he was never without a bulletproof vest.*





**Hitler feared being poisoned** and all dishes on the Führer's table were checked before serving by one of many female tasters.

The drug methamphetamine, sold as Pervitin, was also used by the German Army.



**Strychnine, morphine and amphetamine** were among at least 28 different medications that doctor Theodor Morell treated Hitler with during the period 1936-45.

## PARANOIA

### Attempt on his life

After taking power in 1933, Hitler lived in constant fear of assassination. He received many death threats, and more than 40 assassination attempts were foiled. Hitler was constantly surrounded by bodyguards, always wore a bulletproof vest and ate nothing without the food being tasted first by one of 15 women who were recruited as tasters. Fear of death affected the Führer's health; he suffered from recurring abdominal pain and feared dying from a serious disease. Dr Morell was always around Hitler, and by 1945 Hitler was up to taking 28 different pills a day.



**Hitler relaxing with newspaper** in Landsberg prison in the summer of 1924 – the picture is one of the last of Hitler in shirt sleeves.



**The bulletproof vest** visible under Hitler's shirt in 1925 is tucked into a pair of Bavarian Lederhosen.





**Eva Braun was Hitler's secret companion** from 1929 to 1945. She lived with Hitler at the Berghof, but the couple only married in 1945, 36 hours before their joint suicide. Braun's existence was unknown to the German public, who always thought of the Führer as living alone.

## FAMILY

### Führer was man of the people

Hitler lived in a committed relationship with Eva Braun, but the couple were married just hours before their suicide, they had no children and never appeared in public together. Officially, Hitler was single and exclusively dedicated to serve the German people. Before Eva Braun, Hitler had a series of short affairs, including one with his niece Geli, who allegedly committed suicide when the Führer broke up with her for Eva Braun. Hitler supported his half-sister Angela financially, but after the outbreak of war in 1939 he only saw her occasionally.



**Hitler's niece Geli committed suicide** in 1931, allegedly after the end of an affair with Uncle Adolf.



**Fan mail poured in** to the Führer at the Reich Chancellery, including letters from infatuated women.

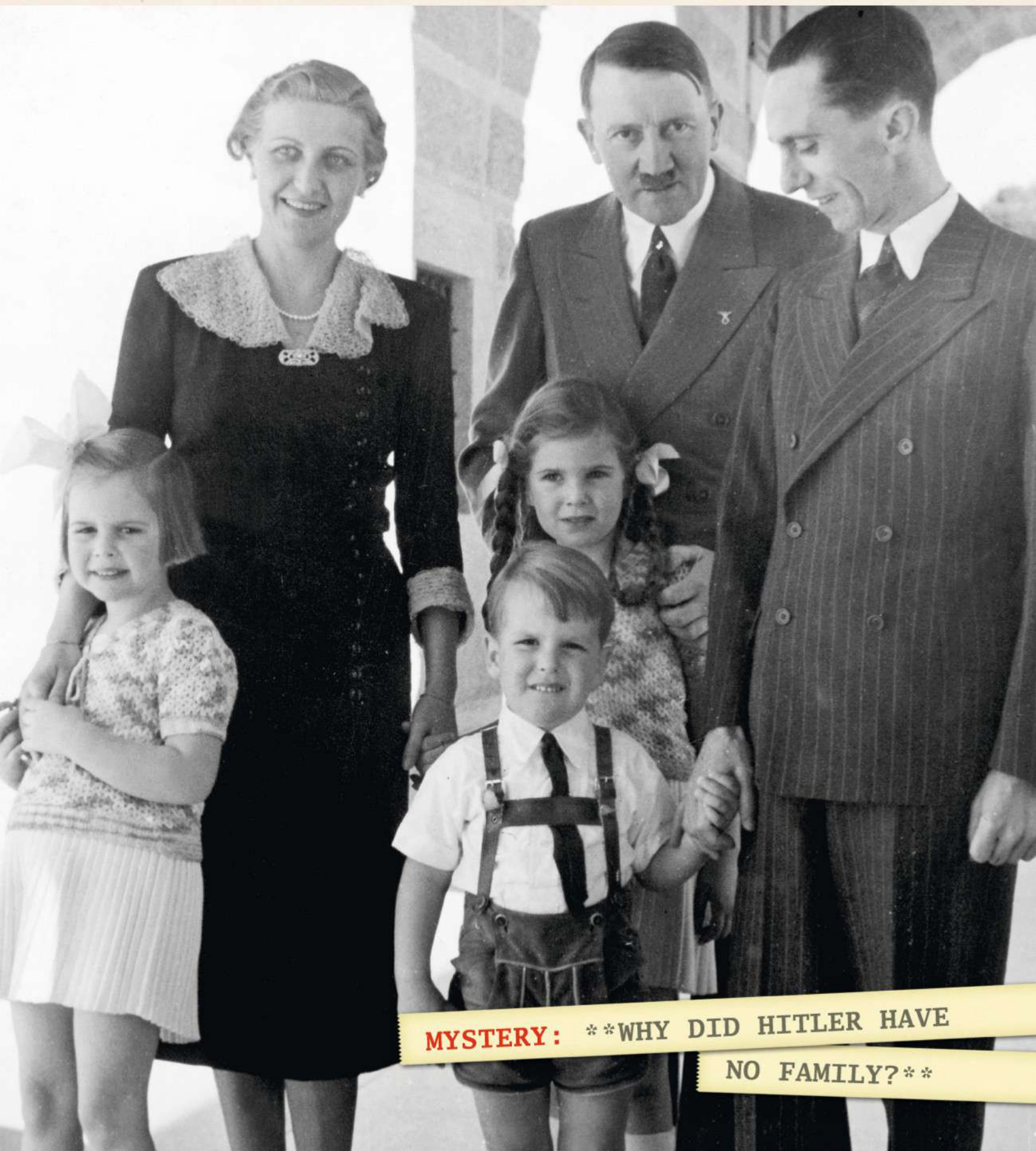
**Blotter for Hitler's 50th birthday** on 20th April, 1939.



**William Patrick Hitler**

**William was the son of Hitler's half-brother Alois and his Irish wife Bridget.** At the outbreak of war in 1939 William was stranded in the US. In 1944 he enlisted in the US Navy.





**MYSTERY:** \*\*WHY DID HITLER HAVE  
NO FAMILY?\*\*

*Hitler cultivated the ideal of the German nuclear family, and in the absence of his own family was often seen with his propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, his wife Magda and their six children. The Goebbels family committed suicide in Hitler's bunker in Berlin in April 1945.*





## WHO WAS THE REAL ADOLF HITLER?

*Eva Braun always waited anxiously for the master of the house, Adolf Hitler, to come home to the Berghof in the Bavarian Alps.*

COLOURED PHOTO BY HEINRICH HOFFMANN/  
AKG IMAGES (JUNE 1942)





## GERMANY/1933-1945

The Germans had made the Nazis the country's strongest political party, and Adolf Hitler built a dictatorship. Much of his 12 years as Führer was spent at his home, the Berghof, in the Bavarian Alps.



# At home with Hitler

### HOUSE

*On the Obersalzberg mountain, Hitler built a home, the Berghof, a mix of alpine lodge and mansion.*

### DAILY LIFE

*The Berghof became Hitler's second home. He liked to stay there for weeks at a time.*

### ENTOURAGE

*While Hitler stayed in the Berghof, he surrounded himself with a circle of trusted staff and their wives.*

*Berlin might have been Germany's capital, but for a long time, Adolf Hitler preferred to rule from his holiday home in Bavaria. At the Berghof, he was surrounded by faithful Nazis, his dog, Blondi, and his passionate mistress, Eva Braun.*







BY TORSTEN WEFER

**C**haos reigned in Berchtesgaden. Trains from all over Germany rolled into the Bavarian town's station to drop off Nazi pilgrims. Every day, thousands flocked to Obersalzberg, where Adolf Hitler had a modest cottage – Haus Wachenfeld – where he liked to stay to rest and work in peace.

The crowd gathered at the fence below the house. Expectations were high, because everyone had heard that Hitler often went out to greet people.

That day, 17th April, 1933, Hitler was visited by his propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels. The commotion at the fence interrupted them in their work, which on that particular day involved preparations to dissolve Germany's trade unions.

Goebbels wrote in his diary how "the crowd waits patiently outside. They clamour incessantly for the Führer, until at last he goes out and shakes hands with hundreds of them. One feasts one's eyes on the childlike enthusiasm which the people feel for Hitler."

The crowd shouted "Heil Hitler" and sang, while a group of Hitler Youth boys from Braunau (Hitler's birthplace) had the honour of being invited to dinner.

Goebbels noted how the boys were "radiantly happy to sit with him,"

Meanwhile, the SS bodyguards went down to the mountain road to bring calm to the Alps once more. The next day, new hordes of fans would swarm up the mountain.

## Hitler moved up the mountain

Nowhere meant as much to Hitler as Obersalzberg. He hid himself away there in 1925, when he was released from prison after the failed Beer Hall Putsch.

Using the pseudonym Herr Wolf, Hitler rented a wooden hut to write the last chapters of *Mein Kampf*, and with the money he made from it, he was able to rent, and then buy Haus Wachenfeld, which had a cosy living room, sunny terrace and a couple of guest rooms.

After taking power in 1933, he went to Obersalzberg for several weeks, so party officials, ministers and members of the military had to travel to Bavaria whenever decisions had to be made.

Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's personal photographer, was also among the

## HITLER'S HOMES

### Munich

Until 1929, Adolf Hitler lived in hostels and small flats. Then he was given a large apartment at 16 Prinzregentenplatz, in Munich. It was his official address until his death.



guests. He took many photos of the Führer in private moments – out walking or tobogganing, for example. The pictures were used in the book *Hitler as No One Knows Him*, which sold in huge numbers.

### A room for Eva

By 1935, the modest house was too small to handle the influx of visitors – Hitler

needed something bigger and more appropriate. He borrowed a drawing board from an architect to design his dream home. The building quickly took shape, and not even his favourite architect, Albert Speer, was allowed to interfere.

"Most architects will put a wide variety of ideas down on paper, and see which lends itself best to further development. It was characteristic of Hitler that he regarded his first inspiration as intuitively right," Speer explained about the rapid drawing process that extended Haus ►

## HORDES OF FANS



**Pilgrimage.** Every day, thousands of Germans flocked to Hitler's house. He happily spared an hour from his schedule to greet them.

The photographer Heinrich Hoffmann took several private pictures for the book *Hitler as No One Knows Him*.



HEINRICH HOFFMANN/BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY, MUNICH

HEINRICH HOFFMANN/BAVARISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK MÜNCHEN



## HITLER'S MOUNTAIN

*"Berchtesgaden is a lovely town in the mountains. From the Eagle's Nest, the view was beautiful – the living room being round and facing out on every side on the valley."*

John F Kennedy after a visit to Obersalzberg, 1945



**Hitler's Berghof impressed several foreign guests including the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain.**

HEINRICH HOFFMANN & EVA BRAUN /  
BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY, MUNICH





# A house according to Hitler's personal tastes

The photographer Heinrich Hoffmann used colour film when, in 1936, he documented the Berghof, Hitler's new house at Obersalzberg.

Hitler himself drew up the plans for his home in the mountains above Berchtesgaden. The ground floor was designed for business, while the first floor contained his and Eva Braun's bedrooms. The stylish décor was the work of interior designer Gerdy Troost, widow of Paul Ludwig Troost, one of the most prominent Nazi architects. Hitler's own architect, Albert Speer, was not impressed: "[It] was a plan that would have been graded D by any professor at an institute of technology."



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

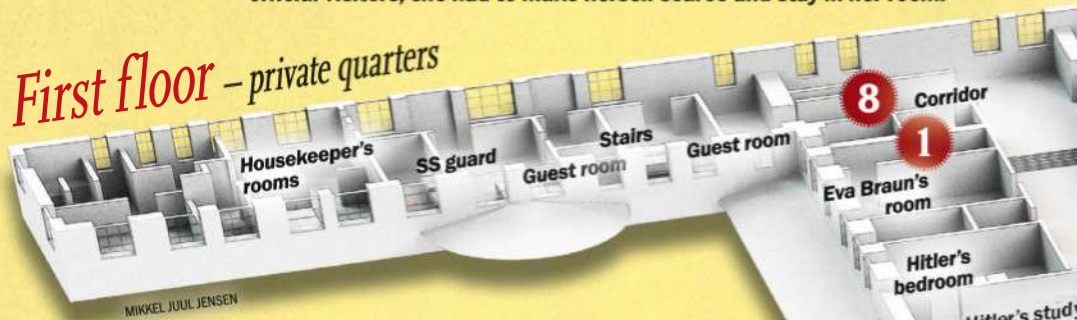
**Eva's bedroom was furnished with a large sofa bed. When Hitler had official visitors, she had to make herself scarce and stay in her room.**



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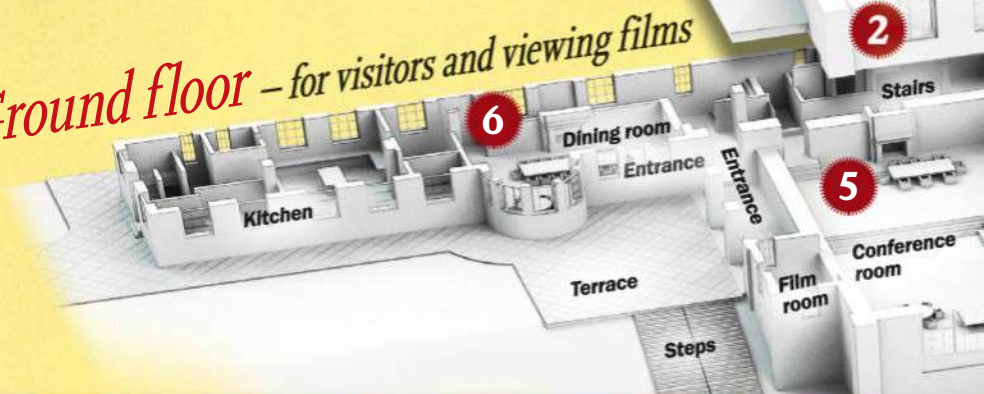
**Corridor leading from the stairs to Hitler's rooms on the first floor.**

*First floor – private quarters*



MIKKEL JUUL JENSEN

*Ground floor – for visitors and viewing films*



BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY, MUNICH

**Hitler's study was furnished in green, his favourite colour.**

**The dining room with space for 20. Hitler sat so he could look out of the window.**

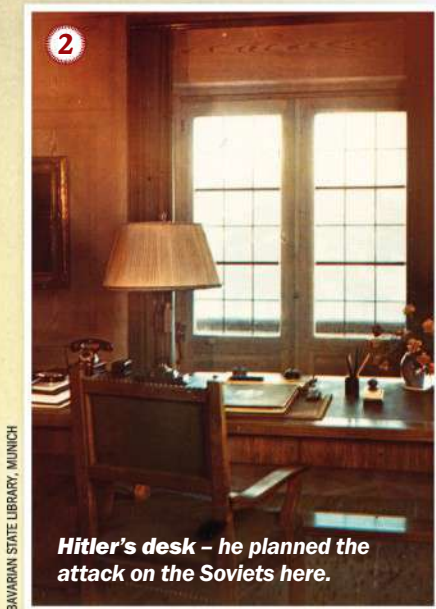


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WALTER FRENTZ/ILLSTEIN BILD (1944)





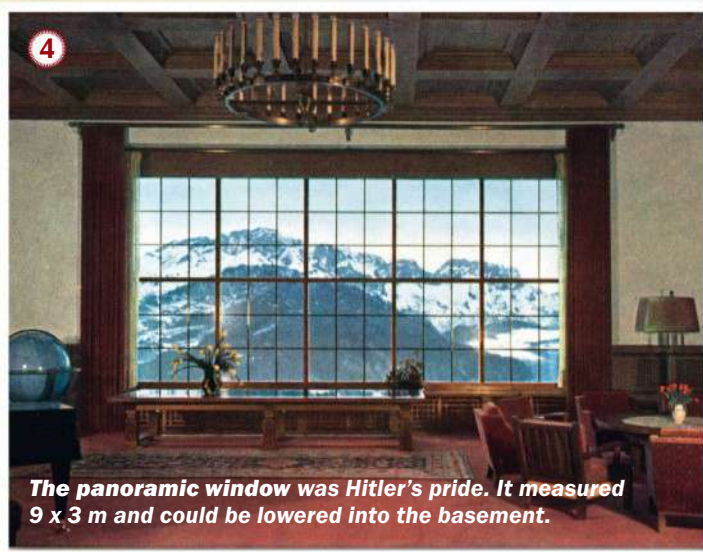
**Hitler's desk – he planned the attack on the Soviets here.**

BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY, MUNICH



**Living room. The cushions were embroidered by female fans.**

BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY, MUNICH



**The panoramic window was Hitler's pride. It measured 9 x 3 m and could be lowered into the basement.**

ANG IMAGES

Wachenfeld, transforming it into Hitler's new alpine home, the Berghof.

Money was no object when the materials were ordered – stone from Bohemia, Italian marble and expensive wood from South America. Officially, Hitler paid for it all himself, but most of the money actually came from the Adolf Hitler Fund, established by his closest associate, Martin Bormann, with donations from industrialists.

With impressive speed, the house shot up on the grassy hillside. The drawings included a 9 x 3 m panoramic window that could be lowered into the floor below by electric motors. Hitler liked to boast that it was the world's largest lowerable window.

By the time the roof had to be built, however, the money had run out. Instead of the larch shingles that were planned, Hitler had to settle for zinc sheeting.

"The fact that Hitler had run out of money at that point was something I learnt from his aide. We all laughed to ourselves," recalled his housekeeper, Herbert Döhring, many years later.

The Berghof was finished in a few months. A wide set of steps led from the road up to a large terrace, where official receptions could take

place. Inside was the great hall – a combined conference and living room, with a six-metre long desk, armchairs, a fireplace and a film projector.

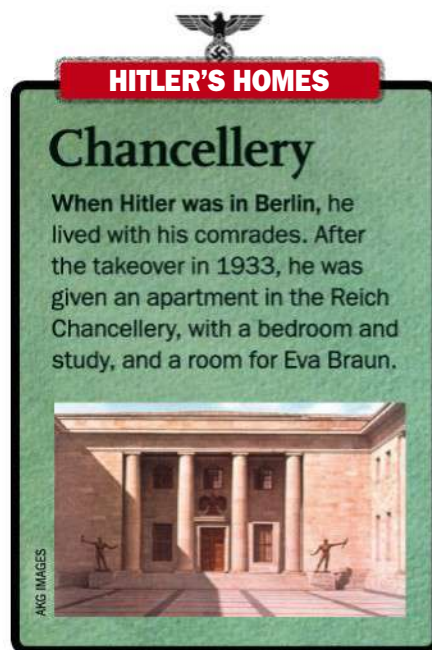
In the basement, Hitler installed a bowling alley that few people were allowed to see. "If the bowling associations get wind of it, they will make me honorary president of every club," he feared.

On the first floor was Hitler's study. Behind it lay Hitler's spartan bedroom, with an iron bed, armchair and desk, plus a door through to a bathroom. On the wall hung a portrait of his late mother, Klara.

Via the bathroom, Hitler had discreet access to Eva Braun's bedroom. Until 1945, very few people knew that the German leader had a mistress, because she was kept out of sight. At official meetings, Hitler sent her up to her room, so no one knew she was there. For a long time, even Hermann

Göring believed that Eva Braun was just one of Hitler's secretaries.

Those who knew kept quiet, for gossiping about the Führer was forbidden. "Nobody spoke of them," ▶



## HITLER'S HOMES

### Chancellery

When Hitler was in Berlin, he lived with his comrades. After the takeover in 1933, he was given an apartment in the Reich Chancellery, with a bedroom and study, and a room for Eva Braun.



ANG IMAGES

### Hitler's house rules

1. Smoking was strictly prohibited.
2. No conversations with staff.
3. Hitler to be addressed as "Führer".
4. Women must use make-up sparingly.
5. Guests weren't allowed to tell others about their experience at the Berghof.
6. Political discussions not allowed.
7. Guests not allowed to write a diary.

SOURCE: H VAN CAPPELLE & AP VAN DE BOVENKAMP





explained Rochus Misch, a member of Hitler's bodyguard until 1945.

"Eva did not correspond to the ideal of a German maiden, as one might have expected. A natural girl, a girl rooted to the soil, this was not her thing. She changed several times a day, was always carefully made up and wore expensive jewellery," recalled Misch.

## Locals threatened

Hitler placed the administration of Obersalzberg in the hands of his closest employee, party secretary Martin Bormann, who had big plans for the area, which involved forcing the local residents to move away.

Hitler demanded that Bormann purchase their properties at market price – which pained the parsimonious Nazi: "The Führer has expressly ordered this. If the inhabitants of the Obersalzberg have to move away from here because of us, you have to pay them not only for their property, but also for the loss of their homeland."

However, if the homeowners refused to sell, Bormann was allowed to threaten them with being sent to a concentration camp, so the houses could be torn down.

In their place, SS barracks were built for defending the mountain, along with an estate for supplying food, and quarters for thousands of construction

workers, because Obersalzberg was developing rapidly.

The Berghof had already become too small. The house needed an extra wing with rooms for adjutants, a large staff of servants, and a dental surgery.

Bormann erected fences around the area, creating the *Führersperrgebiet* (the Führer's territory) – a total of 100 hectares, guarded by the SS.

Marshal Hermann Göring, architect Albert Speer and Martin Bormann moved to the mountain, becoming

Hitler's neighbours and joining his trusted circle.

The Führer's entourage also included physician Theodor Morell and his wife Hannelore, SS general Sepp Dietrich, photographer Heinrich Hoffmann and his wife, as well as doctor Karl Brandt and Hitler's secretaries.

"It was almost a family environment," remembered Misch. "With grown-ups sunning themselves, children running around madly, and between them yapping dogs." Among the dogs was

## HITLER'S HOMES

### Wolf's Lair and the Führer's train

Records show that Hitler stayed 800 days in the military headquarters at the Wolf's Lair, in present-day Poland. Tucked away in the forest were barracks and meeting rooms. Hitler had a bunker available for himself.



The *Führersonderzug* train was Hitler's mobile command post. It had 15 carriages with flack guns front and back. The train included Hitler's saloon car, as well as a conference carriage, two dining cars and carriages for bodyguards and guests. At Wolf's Lair, the train was kept in a 400-metre-long bunker. Hitler left Wolf's Lair by train on 20th November 1944.



## TEA WITH HITLER



Among the fans who gathered in front of Hitler's house was a group from the Band of German Maidens, the girls' wing of the Hitler Youth. He invited them to tea.



Hermann Göring was part of Hitler's inner circle. He also built himself a house on Obersalzberg.



Hitler's German shepherd, Blondi, which he'd been given by Martin Bormann. Hitler had sworn to never have another dog after his previous dog, Muckl, had died. But Bormann knew how relaxed dogs made the Führer, so after giving the leader time to mourn, he offered him Blondi, who would become Hitler's most devoted friend.

### The day began at 11.00

Down in the town of Berchtesgaden, a branch of Berlin's Reich Chancellery was established, so the Führer could approve new laws and regulations when he was at the Berghof.

The people Hitler surrounded himself with rarely changed, and each day at the Berghof followed the same routine.

Hitler usually got up at 11.00, when his servant helped him dress and served a light breakfast of tea, milk and crispbread. He then went downstairs, where he read newspaper articles, listened to Martin Bormann's briefing, and issued his first orders. Meanwhile, his

immediate circle waited on the terrace, where smoking was allowed. The sporty Eva Braun was a chain-smoker – but Hitler never found out.

When he lectured people about smoking, she whistled 'Smoke Gets In Your Eyes'. Hitler, who didn't recognise the song, was ignorant of her mockery.

At 14.00, it was time for lunch. Hitler's entourage and guests gathered in the hall by the dining room, then sat at the long table. The menu consisted of traditional German dishes – Hitler always had a vegetarian meal. "Since being gassed in World War I, I can't even smell meat. It's abhorrent," he told his cook, Anna Krautenbacher.

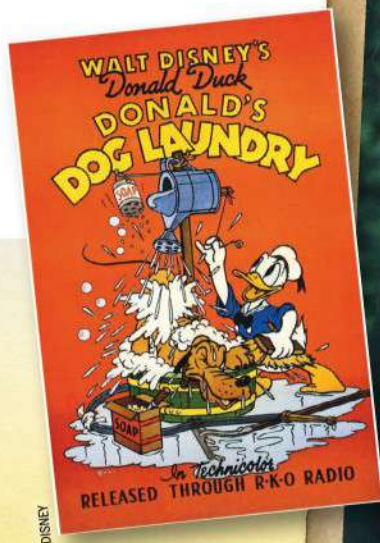
After the meal, the company gathered for a half-hour stroll, stopping at a teahouse further up the mountain,

where everyone sank into comfortable chairs around a table.

"According to taste, one had tea, coffee or chocolate, and various types of cake and cookies, followed by liqueurs. Here, at the coffee table, Hitler was particularly fond of drifting into endless monologues. The subjects were mostly familiar to the company, who listened absently, though pretending attention. Occasionally Hitler himself fell asleep during one of his monologues," architect Albert Speer recalled in his memoirs.

### Endless evenings by the fire

At 18.00, the company returned by car to the Berghof, where guests could relax for a few hours. "Hitler usually withdrew to the upper rooms, while ▶



*The best gift that Goebbels could give the Führer was a collection of Donald Duck films, which he had seized in one of the occupied countries.*  
WALTER FRENTZ/ULLSTEIN BILD (C. 1943)



*The Nazi Party gave Hitler a property with a view as a birthday present. He rarely went there because of altitude sickness.*  
BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY, MUNICH



**EAGLE'S NEST**





the retinue scattered. Bormann frequently disappeared into the room of one of the younger secretaries, which elicited spiteful remarks from Eva Braun," Speer wrote.

Dinner was served at 20.00, after which the company gathered in the great hall, which could be easily transformed into a cinema.

Braun, an avid amateur photographer, showed her short films about life at the Berghof. She was one of the few Germans to have access to colour film.

After, the group watched German films, as well as some American movies. One night, when Hitler saw *Gone with the Wind*, he approached propaganda minister Goebbels: "Something like that might bring our people round again."

Guests quietly chatted, while Hitler and Eva commented on the actors' performances, sometimes holding hands. But often he was silent, staring into the crackling flames in the fireplace. Then the guests would stop talking, so as not to interrupt Hitler's thoughts.

"To animate these rather barren evenings, sparkling wine was handed around and, after the occupation of France, confiscated cheap champagne; Göring and his air marshals had appropriated the best brands," Speer said, describing the late evening routine. He continued: "From 01.00 on, some members of the company, in spite of all

their efforts to control themselves, could no longer repress their yawns. But the social occasion dragged on in monotonous, wearing emptiness for another hour or more, until at last Eva Braun had a few words with Hitler and was permitted to go upstairs. Hitler would stand up about quarter of an hour later, to bid his company goodnight."

When, after the war, Albert Speer thought back to his time as part of Hitler's circle, he remembered the relentless boredom in particular. But Speer couldn't escape the hundreds of invitations; he figured that he had wasted more time with Hitler at the Berghof than he had spent working in his studio, which he had built further down the mountain.

## A gift for the man with everything

On a stroll in November 1936, Hitler casually remarked that there should be some benches on the Kehlstein mountain peak (1,837 metres above sea level), so that hikers could rest and enjoy the magnificent view.

For Bormann, it was his cue for the most ambitious project of his time at Obersalzberg. It was two years before Hitler's 50th birthday, so the secretary got to work on planning a new teahouse, the Eagle's Nest, for the mountain.

To be able to reach it easily, it was necessary to build 6.5 kilometres of

road to a car park. The final stretch consisted of a 126-metre tunnel through rock to a lift shaft ascending 130 metres to the new teahouse.

The total construction costs rose to 30 million Reichsmarks (about £200 million today) – and cost 20 workers their lives. Unfortunately, the recipient was never happy with his present: "The air at that height is too thin," he confided to his housekeeper, Döhring.

One of the few times he went there was for the wedding of Eva Braun's sister Gretl and SS general Hermann Fegelein, on 3rd June 1944. The



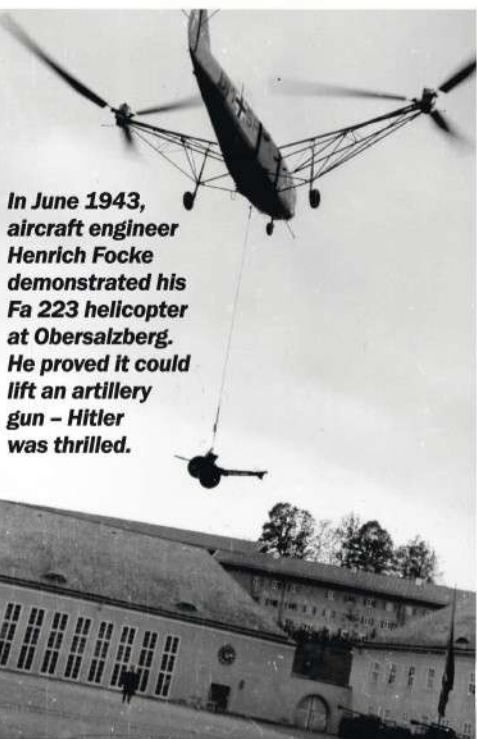
## HITLER'S HOMES

### Führerbunker

The Führer's last residence was the bunker under the Reich Chancellery's garden. He had a bedroom and study, as well as a room for Eva. He killed himself there on 30th April 1945.



AKG IMAGES



In June 1943, aircraft engineer Henrich Focke demonstrated his Fa 223 helicopter at Obersalzberg. He proved it could lift an artillery gun – Hitler was thrilled.



As the war progressed, Hitler (on right) became more isolated and visibly drawn.

EVA BRAUN/BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY, MUNICH

## THE FINAL SUMMER

Eva Braun spent the summer of 1944 alone at the Berghof. She had her sister Gretl and some friends for company. Hitler never returned.

GRETl BRAUN/AKG IMAGES





wedding was to be the last party at Obersalzberg – three days later, the Normandy landings began.

### Farewell to the Berghof

When Hitler woke at 11.00 on 6th June, the Allied attack was underway. The last chapter of the war had begun. The Russians had stormed the Eastern Front, and on 13th July, Hitler announced that he had to go to his headquarters, the Wolf's Lair, to direct the war.

"On that last evening before retiring, he...went up the steps to the bedrooms, turned, made a warm gesture of farewell and left the hall," explained adjutant Nicolaus von Below.

Bormann worked hard to establish defence facilities on the mountain, but Hitler refused to use his alpine fortress. On 30th April, 1945, he committed suicide in Berlin, 700 km from the mountain where he'd spent four years of his time as Chancellor of the Reich. ■

#### FURTHER READING

● Albert Speer: *Inside The Third Reich*, W&N, 2009 ● Herbert Döhring et al: *Living with Hitler: Accounts of Hitler's Household Staff*, Greenhill Books, 2018

# Berghof bombed and looted

**Neither flak guns nor smoke screens could save Hitler's alpine home when the British attacked Obersalzberg in 1945. Now, only the Eagle's Nest remains.**

Special machines could shroud Obersalzberg in artificial fog in minutes to prevent enemy bombers targeting Hitler's alpine mansion. But on 25th April 1945, something went wrong, and 300 British bombers reached Obersalzberg while the house was still visible. Their bombs caused major damage.

Shortly afterwards, the first looters arrived. These were locals heard who had heard that there were large food stores in the Obersalzberg bunker.

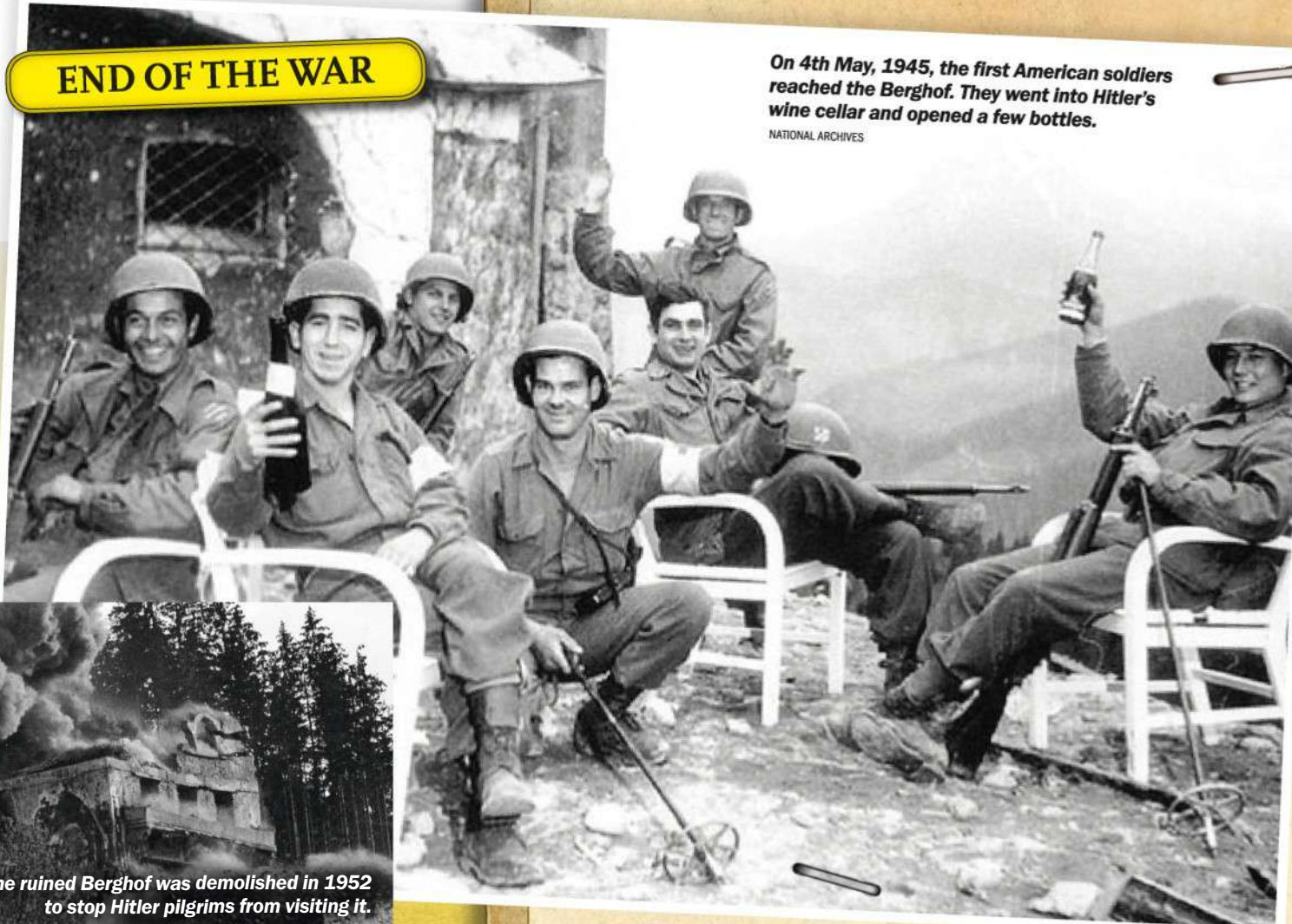
On 4th May, US soldiers reached the mountain retreat. They marked

the event by selecting a few bottles from Hitler's wine cellar. Sitting on the terrace, they toasted peace.

The Americans retained control of Obersalzberg until 1952, when the area was given back to Bavaria. One of the first acts was to blow up the ruins of the Berghof – since the war, it had become a site of pilgrimage for former Nazis.

Of Hitler's properties on Obersalzberg, only the *Kehlsteinhaus* – the mountain-top tea house, which the Allied soldiers called the Eagle's Nest – survived. It is now a tourist attraction.

## END OF THE WAR



**On 4th May, 1945, the first American soldiers reached the Berghof. They went into Hitler's wine cellar and opened a few bottles.**

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

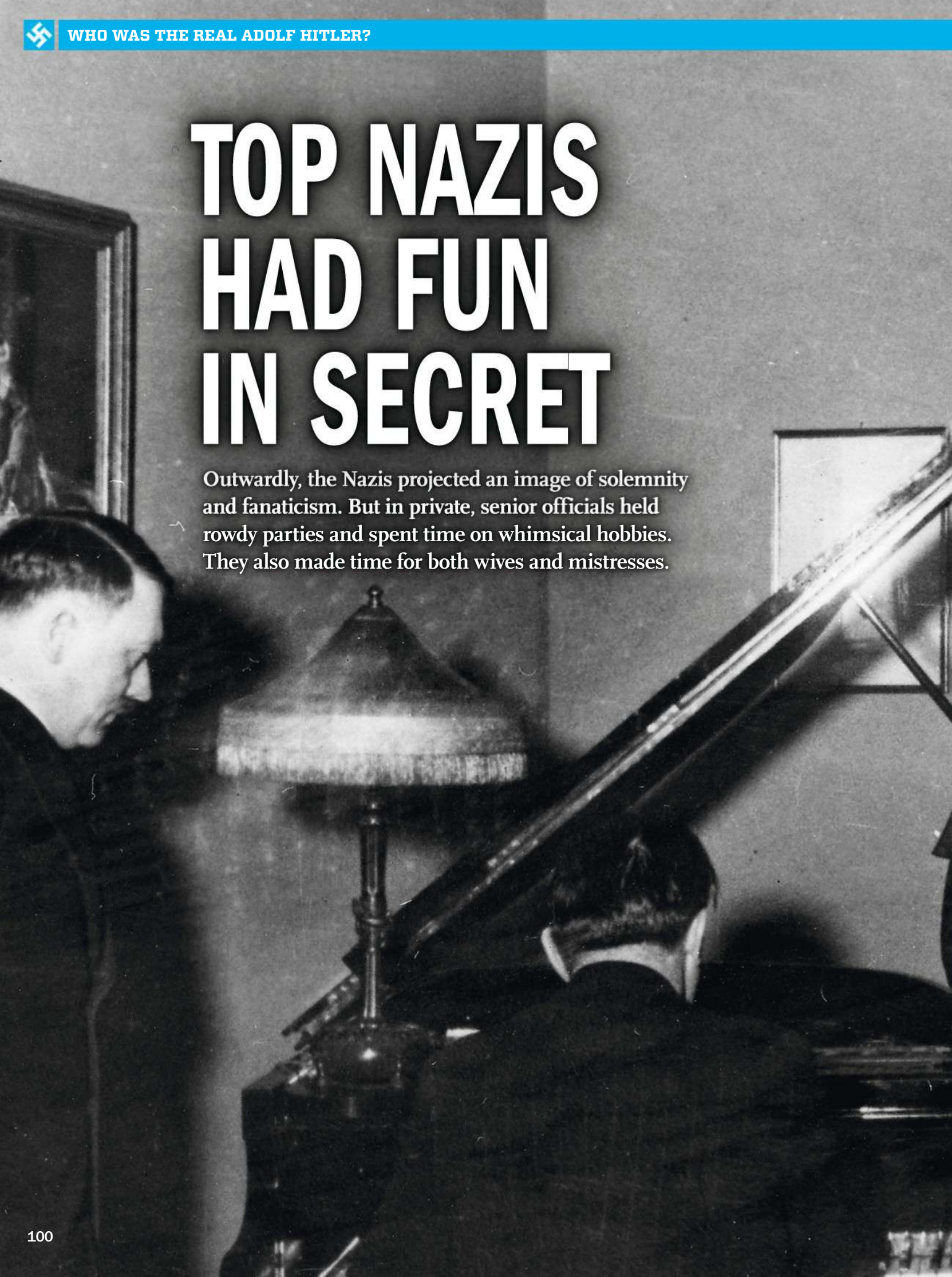
**The ruined Berghof was demolished in 1952 to stop Hitler pilgrims from visiting it.**



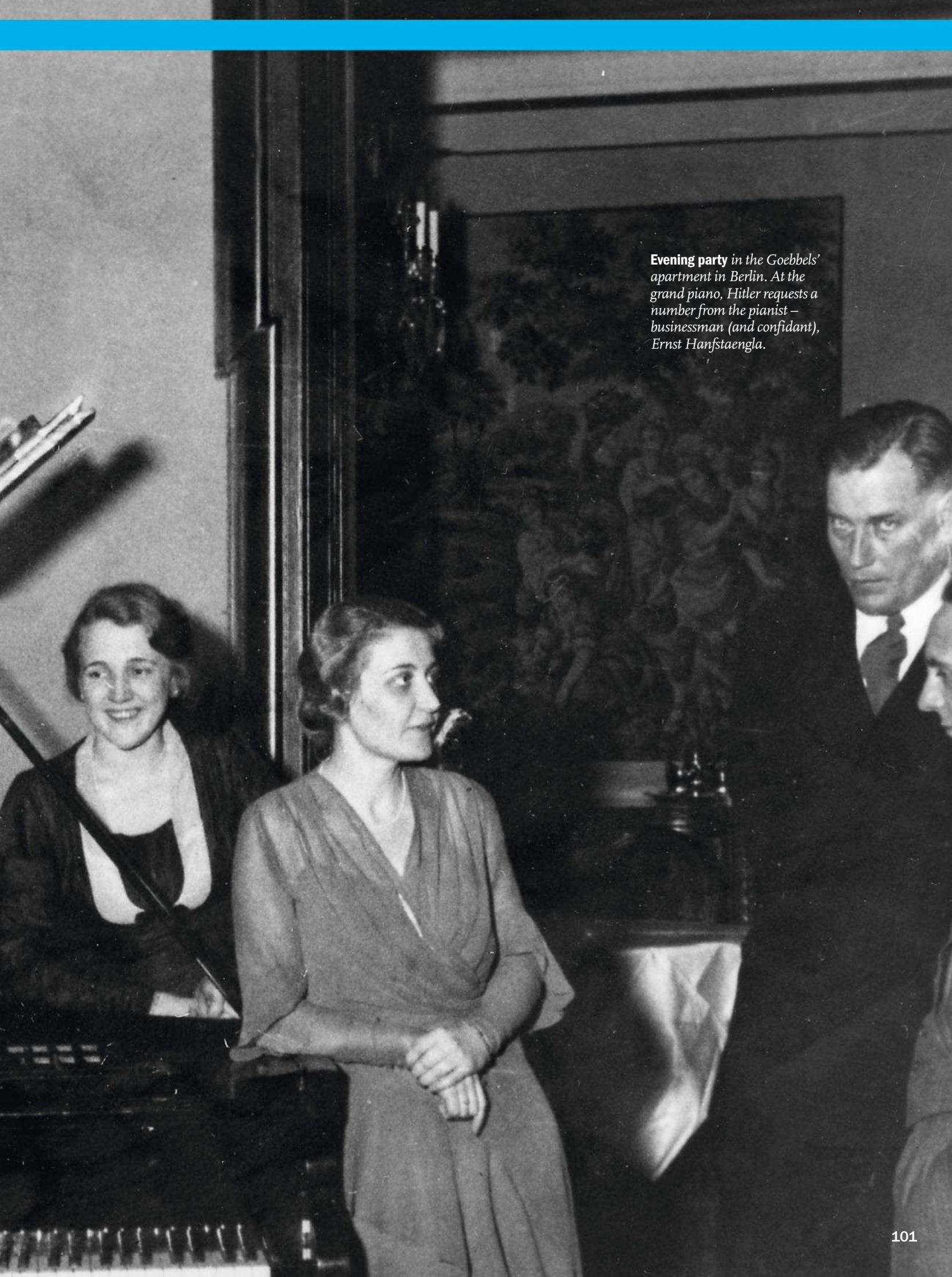


# TOP NAZIS HAD FUN IN SECRET

Outwardly, the Nazis projected an image of solemnity and fanaticism. But in private, senior officials held rowdy parties and spent time on whimsical hobbies. They also made time for both wives and mistresses.







**Evening party** in the Goebbels' apartment in Berlin. At the grand piano, Hitler requests a number from the pianist – businessman (and confidant), Ernst Hanfstaengla.





**Hitler's mistress Eva Braun** had a sunny disposition, and reportedly infused the Führer's inner circle with the party spirit. It was a family trait – here's a celebration from her family home in 1938. Eva is on the left while her mother, Franziska, sits at the table.





Hitler's alpine residence, **Berghof**, was often the setting for dinner parties, where guests enjoyed themselves in front of the fireplace in the great hall where fine art adorned the walls. Eva Braun sits to the right of the Führer behind the table.

## CELEBRATION AND GAMES

### Holidays had the Nazi touch

The Nazis did their best to exploit festive events – for example, toning down the Christian element of Christmas. The coming of Christ was supplanted by the arrival of Hitler, while the star at the top of the Christmas tree was replaced, in some instances, with a swastika.

Weddings and other celebrations were also hijacked with German flags and Nazi salutes. Hitler himself wasn't a party animal, but he liked to attend the more sedate gatherings with his loved ones.

**Hitler didn't drink alcohol, but held champagne in the wine cellar for guests. This bottle of Moët & Chandon 1937 was taken from the Reich Chancellery in Berlin in 1945.**

**Swastika inlaid with precious stones.** This piece of jewellery, with its central ruby, was found by a US GI in Germany.



**German scientist Richard Fiedler marries Ursula Flamm, leader of the League of German Girls, in a classic Nazi wedding.** Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels is behind the newlyweds.



**The New Year was always celebrated by Hitler and his entourage.** Hitler, who was superstitious, is shown here melting lead – an old German tradition. The pattern formed is said to predict events in the coming year.



**TIME TO RELAX****Nazi leaders were family people**

While most Germans only saw senior Nazis at parades and rallies, many were – of course – family people who made time for both children and hobbies.

Reich Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels and his wife Magda had six children and were often portrayed as the perfect Nazi family. Supreme Commander of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring, had only one daughter, but spent a lot of time playing with model trains. The overweight Göring was not athletic, but Reinhard Heydrich was on the German national fencing team, and Rudolf Hess loved skiing in the Alps.

**Blondi, Hitler's German Shepherd**, was used in German propaganda portraying Hitler as an animal lover. Hitler was truly extremely fond of Blondi, who followed him everywhere, even into death.



As Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop travelled extensively, especially before the war. But he also made time for his wife, Annelies, and their five children born between 1921 and 1940. Here he is with their second youngest child, Adolf.



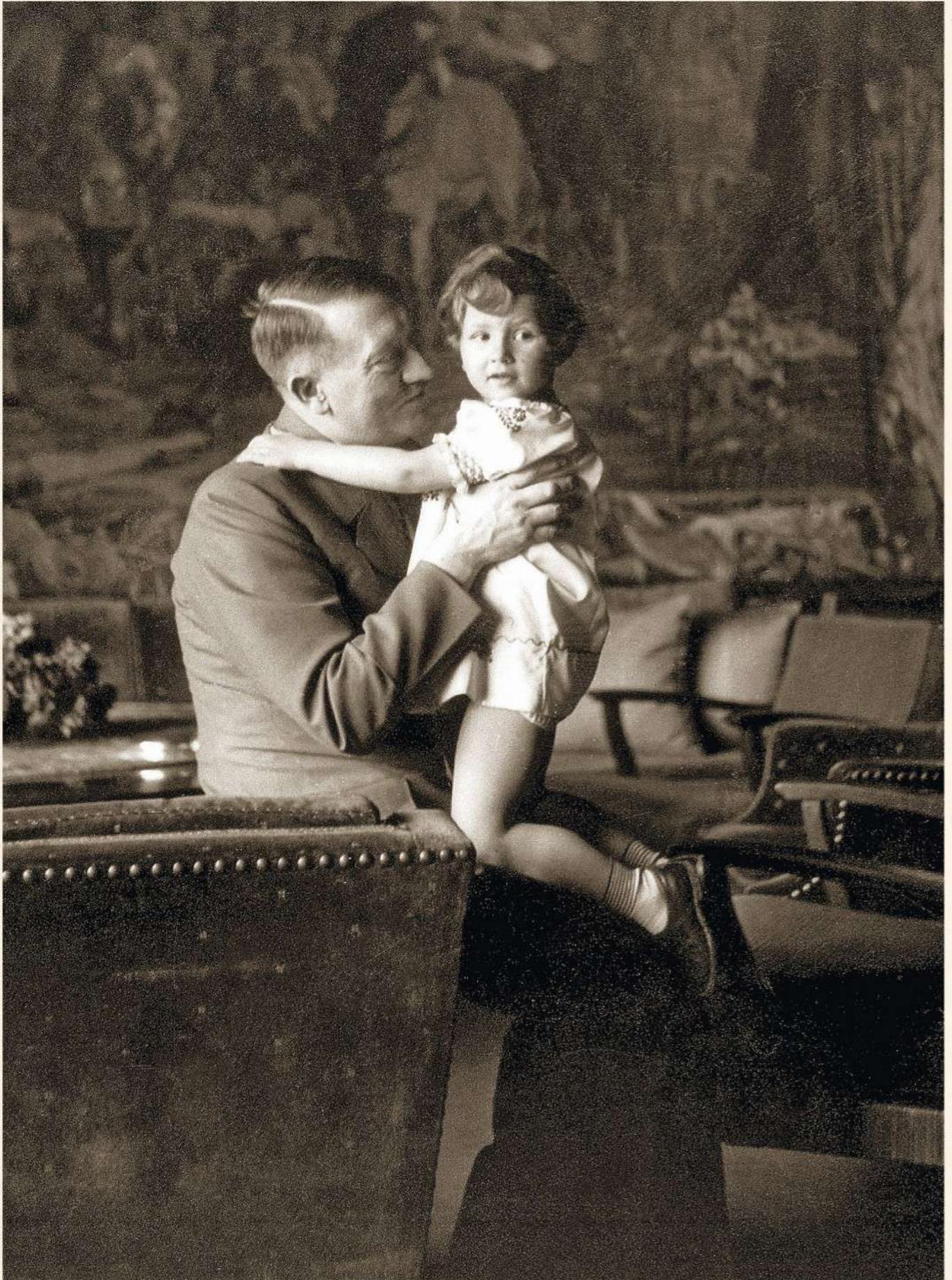
Model trains were Göring's great passion. The Luftwaffe chief furnished both the attic and basement of his property Carinhall with model railways covering 400 square metres. The house was destroyed, but parts of the track have survived.





**Rudolf Hess** was officially Hitler's deputy from 1933 to 1941, but the title was merely symbolic, and Hess lost influence. In return, he had plenty of time to cultivate his interests and did much to stay in shape by playing tennis, practicing gymnastics and skiing.

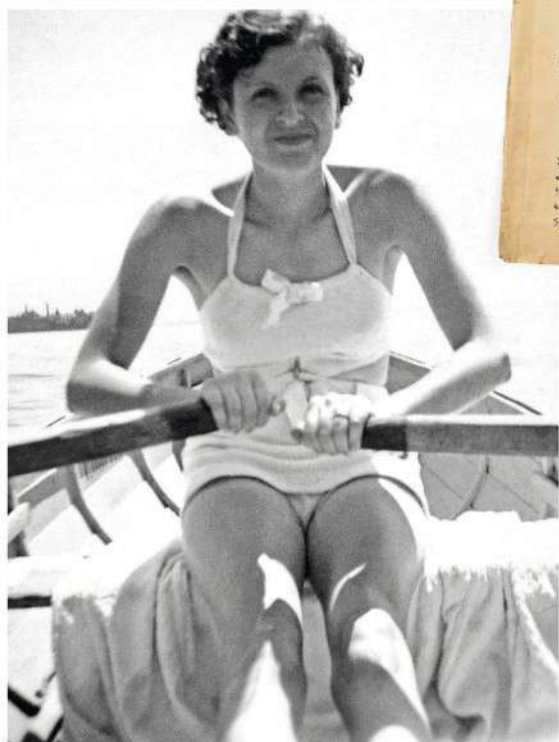




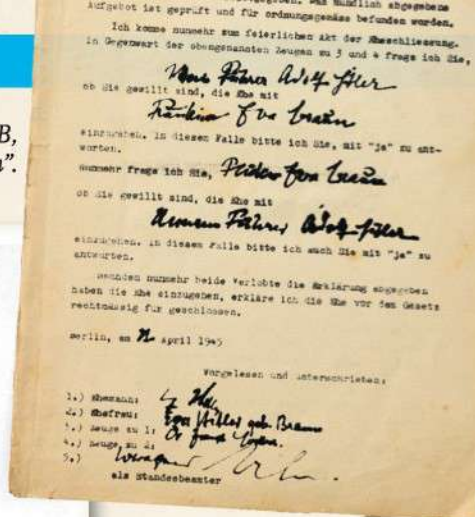
**Hitler did not** want children himself because he feared it would be too difficult for them to live up to their famous father. But he liked to spend time with children who came to visit. Pictured here is Ursula, daughter of Eva Braun's childhood friend Herta Schneider.



On their marriage certificate, Eva Braun wrote a B, but crossed it out and wrote "Eva Hitler, born Braun".



Adolf Hitler was often away, and his mistress Eva Braun had to take care of herself. Here she is on Wörthsee lake in Germany. Towards the end of the war, the couple spent more time together, and married shortly before their joint suicide.



Towards the end of his life, Hitler ingested more than twenty substances daily, prescribed by his physician, Theodor Morell.



## COMPLETELY PRIVATE

### Hitler hid his women away

During the war, the German public knew nothing of Eva Braun or any of Hitler's other acquaintances. The Führer preferred to be seen as a lone, strong man married only to Germany. But behind the scenes, Hitler had relationships with several women, especially Eva Braun, whom he met when she worked for the Nazis' official photographer.



The love of Hitler's life was Angela Maria Raubal (born Hitler), the daughter of his half-sister. The girl was 19 years younger and there was a possible sexual relationship. The Nazi leader was extremely possessive, and this was the likely cause of her apparent suicide in 1931.





**THE PATH TO  
DESTRUCTION**

# DEFEAT AND SUICIDE

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Hitler was a poor military strategist. British and US generals alike dubbed him their best ally because the Führer's military decisions often proved disastrous for Germany. As the enemy marched on Berlin 1945, the Third Reich's leader fortified himself in his bunker deep underground – armed only with deadly cyanide pills and a pistol.

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# WOLF'S

## Bunker life broke Hitler

*In 1940, the Germans built the Führer's secret headquarters in a swampy, mosquito-infested forest – Wolfsschanze, the Wolf's Lair. Hitler spent over 800 days here, keeping his generals on a short leash, while directing the invasion of the Soviet Union. But life in the lair took an enormous physical and mental toll, and soon the dictator saw enemies everywhere.*



# LAIR



Artificial trees hid the Wolf's Lair from Allied aircraft and kept Hitler's hideout secret.

**As the war turned, Hitler became more and more withdrawn, encapsulated beautifully by the wax figure on display in Madame Tussauds Berlin.**

SHUTTERSTOCK, GETTY IMAGES





BY JEPPE NYBØ AND JANNIK PETERSEN

In July 1944, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel was en route to Germany's north-eastern corner. As was his habit when flying to the *Wolfsschanze* (Wolf's Lair), Hitler's closest military adviser looked out of the window and let his eyes wander over the terrain below.

Below him, a forest covered the ground for as far as the eye could see, but the field marshal wasn't enjoying the view. Instead, he killed time by trying to spot Hitler's headquarters from the air.

Unlike enemy spy planes, Keitel knew precisely where to look: *Wolfsschanze* was to be found in the forest eight kilometres east of the East Prussian town of Rastenburg (now Ketrzyn in Poland).

Huge concrete bunkers, roads and a railway platform should have been difficult to hide, yet Keitel failed to catch a glimpse of Hitler's Eastern Front headquarters: "Despite my precise knowledge of its location [I] was never able to pin-point it from the air," he admitted.

Somewhere beneath the field marshal's plane, Hitler roamed restlessly around the Wolf's Lair as the summer heat, malaria-carrying mosquitos and declining fortunes of war slowly sucked the life out of the Führer. Over the course of his 800-plus days in the Wolf's Lair, the strongman of Nazi Germany was slowly ground down, from a

charismatic and inspirational leader into a broken and disillusioned maniac.

### Concrete bunkers hid in the forests

From the very outset of World War II, Adolf Hitler had been so deeply distrustful of his army generals that he insisted on personally leading the German Wehrmacht. To do this, he needed to be close to the front. Following the occupation of France in summer

1940, the Führer had ordered the construction of an advanced headquarters in East Prussia to direct Operation Barbarossa, the planned invasion of the Soviet Union.

The new headquarters was to be Hitler's largest so far, and Fritz Todt – the engineer who'd built Germany's autobahn network in the 1930s – was duly tasked with the job.

After months combing East Prussia, Todt proposed a site east of the town of Rastenburg.

In the heart of the Masurian forests, a camp of considerable size could be hidden beneath the forest canopy. It could easily be defended against land-based attacks, thanks to the area's numerous lakes and marshes that, coupled with dense forest, provided a barrier against armoured vehicles.

Hitler approved the plans and construction work began in late 1940. Secrecy was so tight that only Hitler's inner circle was told what the camp

would be used for. Among the labour force involved in its construction, the site was known by several deliberately misleading names: *Anlage Nord* (Camp North) and *Chemische Werke Askania* (Askania Chemical Works). With the use of picks, shovels and nearly 5,000 labourers – many of whom were prisoners in Nazi concentration camps – the project progressed at a rapid pace.

The workers first constructed a network of roads through the swampy forest, then began building heavy concrete bunkers and numerous smaller buildings. Bomb shelters, meeting rooms and accommodation were built above ground, as the subsoil was too swampy to support many underground buildings.

The tight schedule meant that work continued into the night, the forest illuminated by floodlights as nearly 100 buildings took shape. In total, an area the size of around 22 football pitches was built and enclosed by barbed wire.

After seven months of intense activity, engineering troops were flown in to add camouflage nets and paint the concrete buildings to blend in with their forest surroundings. The Führer's top-secret headquarters was completed just in time for the launch of Operation Barbarossa.

### Wolf's Lair was named after Hitler

Berlin sweltered as Hitler boarded his personal train on 23rd June, 1941, heading to East Prussia. The day before, he'd unleashed Nazi Germany's armies against Stalin's Soviet Union, and now he moved himself closer to the front.

Eagerly anticipating his arrival at his new *Führerhauptquartier* (Führer's headquarters), Hitler announced that the camp would be called *Wolfsschanze* – Wolf's Lair.

"Why Wolf?" asked one of the Führer's secretaries, Christa Schroeder, as the train sped east.

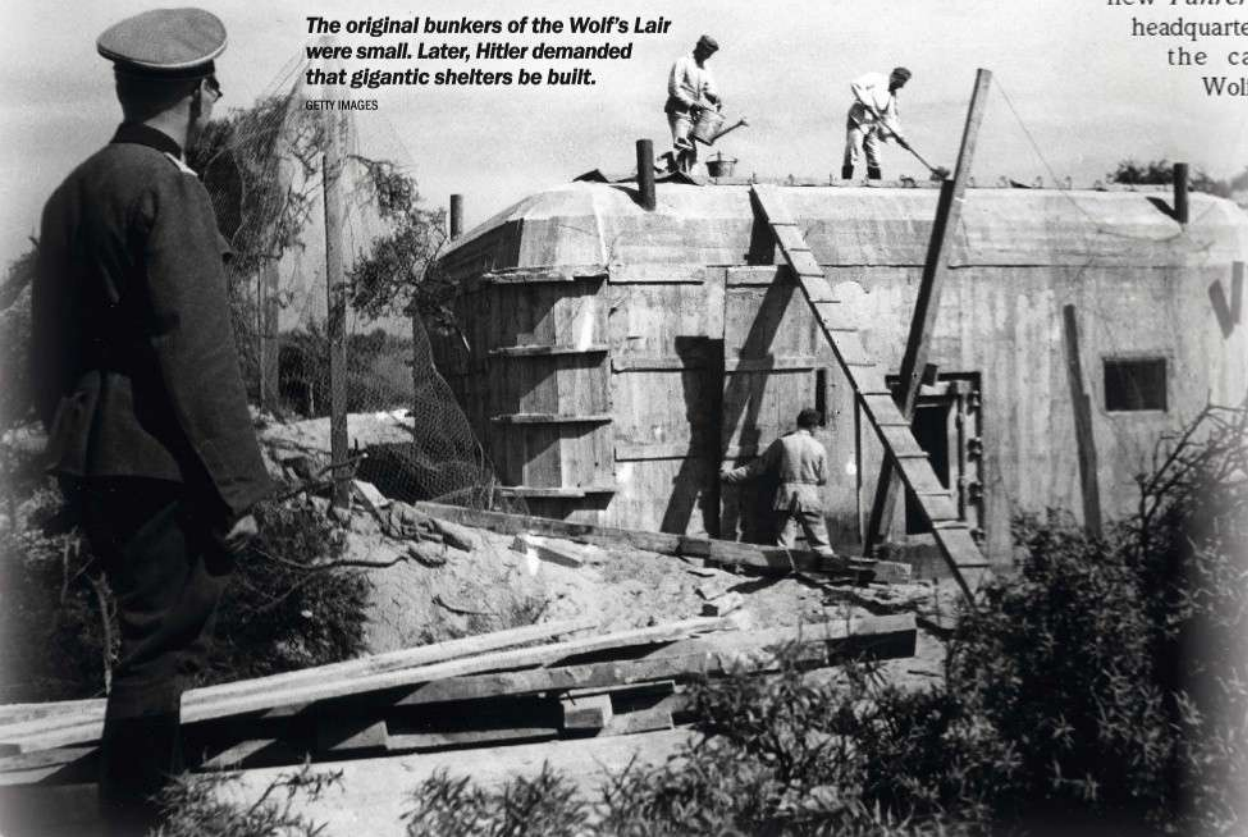
"That was my code name in the years of struggle," Hitler explained, referring to the 1920s, when the Nazis fought to establish themselves.

Shortly after midnight, the bumpy train transferred to a local branch line that Todt's workforce had built. During the construction phase, the railway had



The original bunkers of the Wolf's Lair were small. Later, Hitler demanded that gigantic shelters be built.

GETTY IMAGES





# HQs pre-empted invasion

**Hitler saw himself as a military genius, and personally commanded his troops. A new Führer's headquarters was built before all major campaigns.**

**D**uring World War I, Kaiser Wilhelm II left the battlefield to his generals – resulting in an ignominious defeat, according to Adolf Hitler. The Führer

swore not to repeat the error. He ordered advanced *Führerhauptquartier* (Führer headquarters) be constructed before all major campaigns, so he could always

remain close to the front to manage his divisions. These advanced headquarters were built under utmost secrecy and consisted primarily of bunkers. Many were small and never used by the Führer, who instead left them to his generals.

ILLUSTRATION CARSTEN SCHÜD W



transported building materials to the Wolf's Lair; now it would take Hitler's train all the way to the front gate.

A column of military vehicles lay waiting for Hitler to drive him the few hundred metres to the inner security zone of the Wolf's Lair, from where he intended to lead the campaign in the east. In contrast to the Führer's small headquarters for the invasions of Holland,

Belgium and France, the Wolf's Lair was proof that he expected a longer stay.

As a result, both Hitler's private bunker and the headquarters' other buildings were furnished as comfortably as possible. In the officers' apartments, the walls were lined with wooden panels painted in cheerful colours. The heavy-duty bunkers came with built-in ▶

**FRITZ TODT**





# Hitler's train ran right to the door

Wolfsschanze had to be near a railway, because Hitler preferred to travel in his custom-built luxury train.

When Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Hitler directed the attack from his specially built *Führersonderzug* (Führer's special train). The train carried everything Hitler needed: a command car with maps of the battlefields and a communications centre, the Führer's private car and two flatbed wagons with anti-aircraft guns.

But the train turned out to be too small to accommodate the army's high command, so Hitler only met with his senior commanders a few times during the invasion. Instead, the Führer decided to first build advanced headquarters before any future invasions.

He continued to use the train as his preferred means of transport, which is why secret tunnels were built in Poland. They were named Anlage Mitte and

Anlage Süd, and were designed to hide the train from enemy aircraft.

The Wolf's Lair was located so that Hitler could travel by train to a station on the headquarters' outskirts and walk the last few hundred metres to his bunker.

Hungary's regent, Miklós Horthy (left), was one of many important visitors Hitler received on the platform at Wolfsschanze.

GETTY IMAGES

Anlage Süd comprised two railway tunnels 480 metres long, with two-metre-thick concrete walls.

wardrobes, bathrooms with running water and even enamelled baths. In addition, all major buildings came with air-conditioning to combat the stifling heat of East Prussia's summers.

Striking woodcuts and bright colours couldn't, however, hide the fact that Hitler's headquarters lay in the middle of a dank swamp.

One of the men who arrived at the Wolf's Lair with Hitler and the German High Command was stenographer Helmuth Greiner. As he got off the train, sweat immediately began to form on his brow. In addition to the heat and humidity, Greiner was greeted by Wolfsschanze's third scourge: mosquitos. He could find no respite from the sound of buzzing wings, as marshy ponds and stagnant lakes lay everywhere within the 6.5-km<sup>2</sup> area.

"It would be hard to pick a more senseless site than this," Greiner grumbled in a letter to his wife after sinking exhausted into his bunker. "We

wake up every morning with a headache. Our underwear and uniforms are always cold and clammy."

On top of that, the Wolf's Lair was so isolated that nothing – from the camp's Turkish baths and small tea houses to the cinema or excellent canteen – could prevent the camp's 2,000 men and few women from feeling trapped.

## Victories excited the Führer

Many consoled themselves with the thought that hopefully they wouldn't be at Wolfsschanze for too long. The war on the Eastern Front appeared to be exceeding all expectations, and after a month, the German armies had penetrated deep into the Soviet Union, celebrating numerous victories along the way.

Hitler followed every development closely. Every morning, afternoon and evening, the Führer held a war conference with his closest military advisor, Field Marshal Keitel. For an average of three hours each time, the

field marshal and his staff reviewed the incoming reports from the army, air force and navy. Maps of the troops' progress were eagerly discussed, and the mood was euphoric.

Hitler, too, was in high spirits and was often seen strolling casually around the inner security zone of the Wolf's Lair, chatting with the labourers who continued to dig, hammer and hone the camp. The general staff around him shared his good mood and competed to sit with the Führer during mealtimes.

Victories on the Eastern Front, however, offered no protection against the humid climate of the Wolf's Lair. In August 1941, Hitler fell ill and missed the regular conferences for several days.

"I feel very bad now," the Führer confided to his personal doctor, Theodor Morell. "Just now I suddenly felt giddy. I don't know what it is."

Morell treated him by placing leeches on his ears – to combat the dizziness – and warned the Führer against staying at the Wolf's Lair for long periods at a time: "The bunker is damp and unhealthy, the temperature just right for growing fungi... I reminded him that I had

173,260 m<sup>3</sup>  
of  
concrete  
was used during  
the construction  
of the Wolf's  
Lair.



initially recommended more frequent motor journeys or five days in his special train, a change of scenery to somewhere at a greater altitude," noted Dr Morell in his diary.

The doctor put his stubborn patient on a strict diet consisting of a single boiled egg, mashed potatoes and strawberries. Gradually, the Führer began to recover.

### Setbacks enraged Hitler

The German offensive seemed unstoppable throughout the autumn of 1941, and soon Hitler's troops were in position just outside Moscow. But as the Russian winter set in, the fortunes of war turned. The advance on the Russian capital stalled, and in December, the Red Army began to push the Germans back.

Hitler's mood plunged, and he raged at his 'incompetent' general staff. On the map table in the Wolf's Lair conference room, the front line was littered with red arrows pointing the wrong way.

German generals explained that Russia's unpaved dirt roads had either been turned to mud or were buried under deep snow. They also complained that supply lines were overstretched, so troops at the front lacked both ammunition and fuel for their vehicles. And despite the capture of endless numbers of Soviet troops, the Red Army still had one million men and thousands of tanks available to defend Moscow.

General Franz Halder was chief of staff of the Army High Command (OKH) and was subjected to Hitler's fury daily. According to his diary, these many explanations for the offensive's collapse did not impress the Führer:

"He refuses outright to take any account of the figures and strengths, and insists our superiority is proved by the number of prisoners taken," Halder noted. According to the army's own figures, no fewer than 3.5 million Soviet soldiers had surrendered during the first five months of the campaign. But the generals realised

the losses weren't as catastrophic for Stalin as Hitler seemed to imply. The Soviet Union apparently had an endless stream of young men to send to war.

During a week's stay in Berlin, Hitler pondered his next move. On his return to Wolfsschanze on 16th December, 1941, the Führer exploded with rage after, in his absence, the OKH had ordered the German armies to retreat to the Oka River, 140 km south-west of Moscow.

With the river acting like a castle moat, the army would be better able to withstand the harsh Russian winter. Hitler cancelled the retreat and forbade any future withdrawals. He then fired the army's commander-in-chief, Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, and took over command himself.

Those field marshals and generals who tried to persuade Hitler to accept the strategic retreat were rebuffed by the Führer: "Sir, where in God's name do you propose to go back to, how far do you want to go back?" he said sarcastically. "Do you want to go back 50 kilometres; do you think it is less cold there?"

One of Hitler's secretaries, Traudl Junge, recognised the stunned expression on the faces of the generals as they left the situation room, downcast, after the conference.

"Although they were stronger, wiser and more experienced than me, it often happened that they went to see the Führer armed with unimpeachable arguments... absolutely determined to persuade him that an order was impossible or could not be carried out," she wrote in her memoirs. "But before they had finished, he would begin talking, and all their

objections melted away, becoming pointless ►

## Hitler's 4 worst orders from the Wolf's Lair



Hitler made several fatal decisions in the Wolf's Lair conference room.

### NO WITHDRAWALS

In December 1941, Hitler forbade any retreat on the Eastern Front – the Red Army offensive had to be stopped at all costs. The order proved fatal for the German army, which suffered unnecessary losses over the following years due to Hitler's unwillingness to sanction even minor and strategic withdrawals.

### CUT OFF STALIN'S OIL

In March 1942, Hitler began planning Fall Blau (Code Blue) with his generals at Wolfsschanze. Its aim was the capture of Stalingrad, so the Soviet Union would be cut off from the rich Caucasus oil fields. Fall Blau began in late June 1942 and ended seven months later in catastrophic defeat at Stalingrad. Hitler lost over 600,000 men, 1,600 aircraft and 3,000 tanks.

### BREAK THE RUSSIANS AT KURSK

1943's summer offensive was designed to turn the tide of the war on the Eastern Front, but Hitler's hesitation ruined the German army's chances of a surprise attack on Kursk. The Führer wanted to strengthen his armies with new and more powerful Panther and Tiger tanks. Meanwhile, the Russians had time to build defences where they could lure the Germans into an ambush. At Kursk, Hitler's troops fell into a trap that broke the back of the German panzer divisions. The offensive was Germany's last on the Eastern Front.

### BREAKTHROUGH TO THE COAST

A few days after Antwerp was liberated, Hitler swore to recapture the strategic port with a fierce counter-attack. On 12th September, 1944, Hitler amazed his generals in Wolfsschanze with his plans for the Ardennes offensive. When the operation was launched in December, it quickly stalled and drained the Germans of their last remaining reserves. Thus, Germany was left completely open to an Allied attack from the west.



Combat troops from the Waffen-SS patrolled the forest around Hitler's headquarters.

GETTY IMAGES





# Germans' invisible headquarters

The Wolf's Lair was an obvious target for Allied bombers, and Hitler constantly feared a massive air strike. His response was to make sure his headquarters was invisible from the air.

ILLUSTRATION CLAUDIUS LUNAU

How do 2,000 troops, concrete bunkers 9–10 metres high and the buzz of everyday life stay hidden from enemy reconnaissance aircraft? The difficult task was entrusted to Organisation Todt – the Nazi labour force that had also played a part in constructing the Atlantic Wall. With the help of skilled engineers and slave labour, the Wolf's Lair vanished without trace in a 6.5 km<sup>2</sup> area of the Masurian forest, east of Rastenburg.

During construction, as many trees as possible were left standing, supplemented later with

artificial treetops. These were created by hammering poles into the ground and providing them with a parasol-like tripod. Camouflaged netting was then stretched out over the tripod, making it look like the leafy crown of a tree.

All the Wolf's Lair bunkers had grass planted on their roofs and were fitted with iron hooks, so camouflage could be stretched between them. Advanced radar systems intercepted enemy aircraft 100 km from Wolfsschanze and raised the alarm, so Hitler could reach safety in his bunker.

**ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT:** Due to the intense heat, the daily war conferences were moved to a small, but better ventilated, building in July 1944. Here, Stauffenberg's bomb exploded on 20th July.

Radio and  
telex room

Bormann's  
bunker

In addition to a bodyguard unit from the Waffen-SS, Wolfsschanze was also defended by German paratroopers based in a barracks 70 km away. In the event of an attack on the Wolf's Lair, they would be dropped in by air.

**CAMOUFLAGE NET:** Hooks on the roof of all bunkers made it possible to spread camouflage netting between them, effectively concealing the buildings and traffic at the Wolf's Lair.



## Camp was divided into three zones

The Wolf's Lair covered 6.5 km<sup>2</sup> and was guarded by Hitler's most loyal SS troops. The Führer lived and worked in the heart of the camp: Sperrkreis I. Outside, two security zones were reserved for the SS bodyguard as well as the Führer's immediate staff. The security zones were designed to prevent attacks on Hitler – both from enemy forces and German rebels who wanted the dictator dead.

**Sperrkreis III:** In the forest around the two innermost security zones, 54,000 mines were buried in a 150-metre-wide belt. 1,500 SS troops armed with tanks and antitank guns guarded the zone around the clock.

**Sperrkreis I:** Only Hitler's closest employees could move freely within the inner zone. Everyone else required a pass in order to enter.

**Sperrkreis II:** SS troops as well as the camp's civilian officials were accommodated here. Ministers such as Albert Speer also had their apartments here.

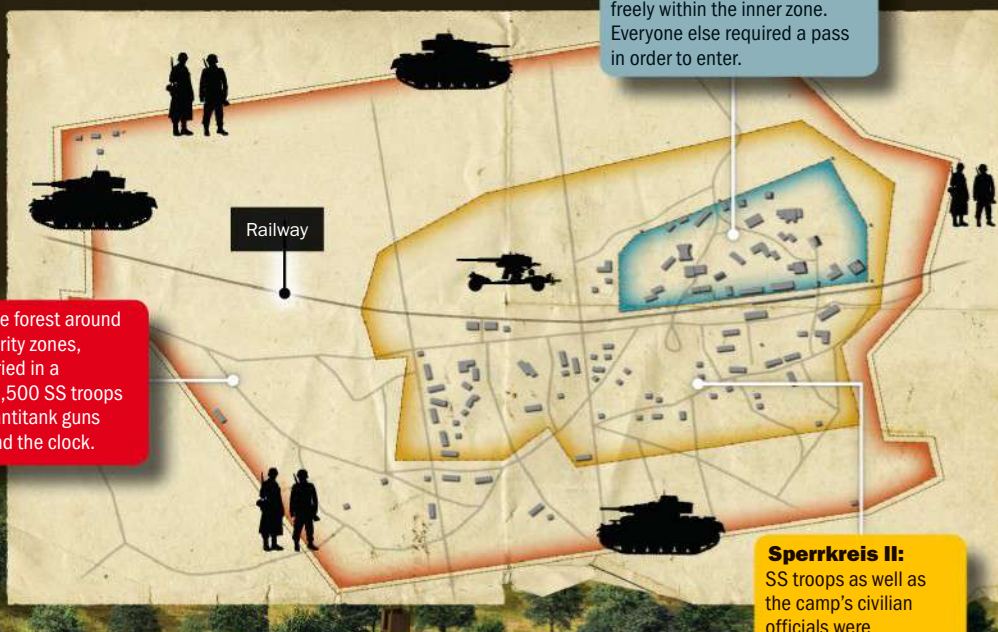
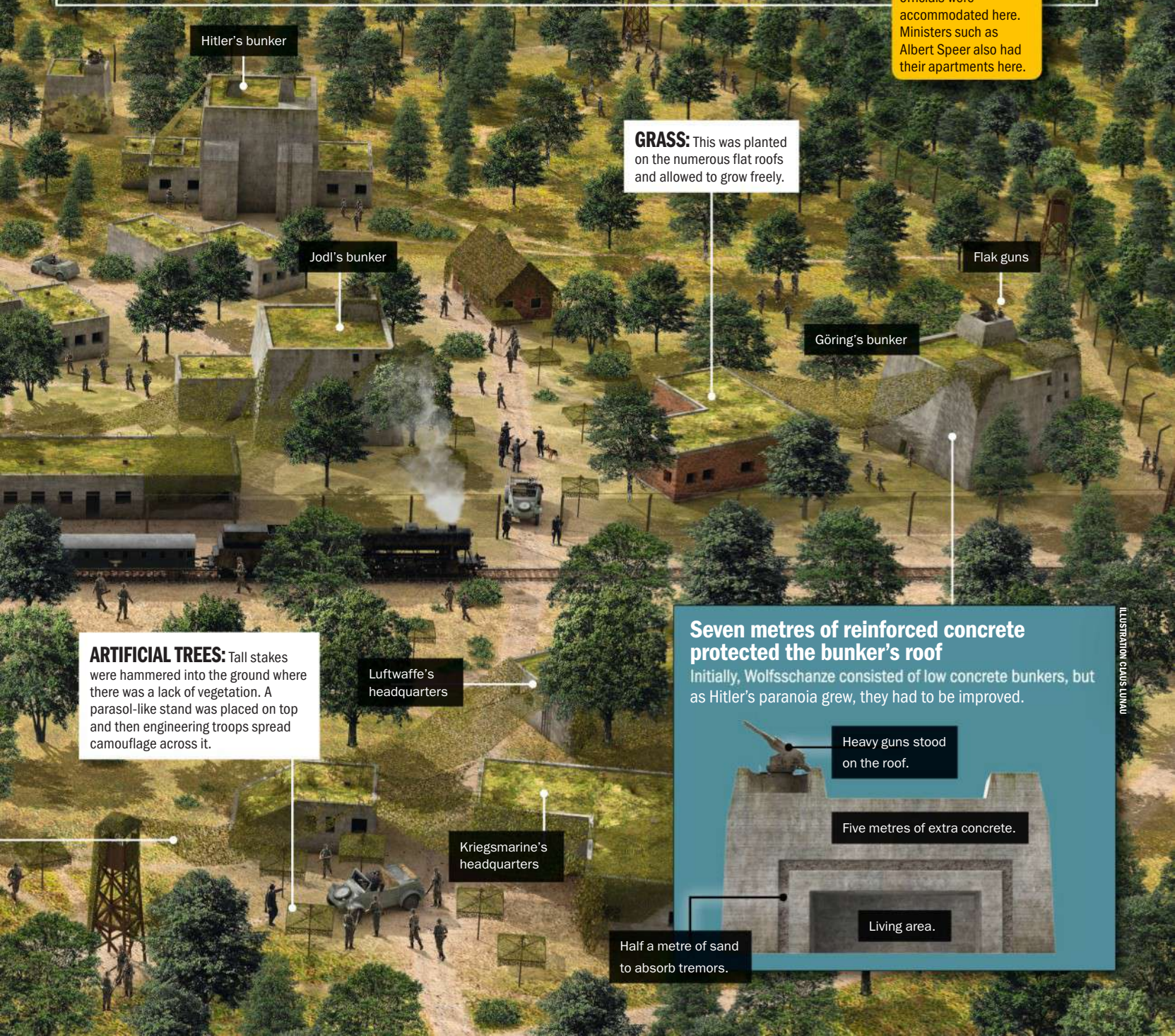


ILLUSTRATION CLAUDIUS LUNAU



Hitler's bunker

Jodl's bunker

**GRASS:** This was planted on the numerous flat roofs and allowed to grow freely.

Flak guns

Göring's bunker

**ARTIFICIAL TREES:** Tall stakes were hammered into the ground where there was a lack of vegetation. A parasol-like stand was placed on top and then engineering troops spread camouflage across it.

Luftwaffe's headquarters

Kriegsmarine's headquarters

## Seven metres of reinforced concrete protected the bunker's roof

Initially, Wolfsschanze consisted of low concrete bunkers, but as Hitler's paranoia grew, they had to be improved.

Heavy guns stood on the roof.

Five metres of extra concrete.

Living area.

Half a metre of sand to absorb tremors.

ILLUSTRATION CLAUDIUS LUNAU





in the face of his theory. They knew it couldn't be right, but they couldn't pin down the flaw in it. When they left him, they felt despairing, crushed, with their former firm and absolute resolve badly shaken, as if they had been hypnotised."

### Guns would create foxholes

Even legendary panzer commander Heinz Guderian fought in vain against the Halt Order. He flew 1,100 kilometres from the front to try to change Hitler's mind but, like so many others, was taken to task:

"They must dig into the ground where they are and hold every square yard of land!" Hitler insisted.

"Digging into the ground is no longer feasible in most places, since it is frozen to a depth of five feet," Guderian protested.

"In that case, they must blast craters with the heavy howitzers. We had to do that in the First World War in Flanders," yelled the Führer, who never missed an

opportunity to remind others that he had served on the front line.

Guderian gave up trying to explain to Hitler that black bomb craters in white snow would quickly attract the enemy's attention and lead to crippling artillery fire. Instead, he argued that holding their position wasn't worth the losses.

The Germans had already lost over 100,000 men trying to encircle Moscow, and every day that passed, more human lives would be wasted. To this, Hitler replied:

"I know that you have not spared yourself and that you have spent a great deal of time with the troops... But you are seeing events at too close a range. You have been too deeply impressed by the suffering of the soldiers. You feel too

much pity for them. You should stand back more. Believe me, things appear clearer when examined at longer range."

Frustrated, Guderian flew back to the front, ignoring Hitler's orders the following day to allow his panzer forces to retreat to better positions. He was promptly relieved of his command.

### Command burden was heavy

In Hitler's eyes, the generals posed the greatest threat to victory in the Soviet Union, and for that reason, he was reluctant to leave the Wolf's Lair for any length of time. The Führer feared that without his leadership, the troops along the Eastern Front would fall back.

"I am terrified at the thought of being away for even five hours, let alone a whole day, because something could happen in the meantime," he confided to Keitel.

But the heavy demands required for managing all German divisions across the Eastern Front on a day-to-day basis exacted a heavy toll on the Führer. During 1942, he became more withdrawn, increasingly agitated and physically bowed.

On the battlefields to the east, Hitler succeeded in stopping the Red Army counteroffensive, and the Führer saw a chance to seize the oil-rich Caucasus, thus paralysing the Russians and securing plentiful supplies for Germany. The offensive was launched, although the Germans desperately lacked fuel for their advanced panzer divisions.

Along with the oil fields, Stalingrad became Hitler's primary target during what the Führer himself predicted would be the decisive weeks of the war. However, both operations proved disastrous. In November, over 300,000 German troops were surrounded in Stalingrad because Hitler forbade them to retreat. At the same time, German cities were increasingly subject to carpet bombings by waves of British bombers.

Furious, the Führer withdrew himself from the general staff in Wolfsschanze to ensure his only interactions were during the daily briefings in the conference room. He stayed up later and later, eating only in the company of his female secretaries.

While at the beginning of the war he'd appeared friendly and courteous, recounting stories from his youth and about his great love Eva Braun, Hitler was now cold and reserved.

"Although Hitler didn't discuss the war or politics in our little company at ▶



## Security failed just once

Until the summer of 1944, Hitler lived a quiet life in the Wolf's Lair, but everything changed on 20th July, 1944.

Staff officer and war hero Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg smuggled a bomb into Hitler's conference room, where the Führer received daily updates about the war.

Von Stauffenberg carried 2 kg of explosives in his attaché bag and easily

evaded the SS security checks. No one thought to perform a body search.

"The possibility had never been taken into consideration that a general staff officer who was summoned to the situation conference room would lend his hand to such a crime," the Reich security service later concluded.

The bomb exploded just two metres from Hitler, but a heavy table leg and a handful of officers stood in the way, and the Führer escaped with just bruises. From then on, everyone was body searched, and Hitler even considered having guests X-rayed.



Hitler's torn trousers and devastated conference room were displayed as evidence of the failed attack.

GETTY IMAGES





**Italian dictator Benito Mussolini visited Hitler several times at the Wolf's Lair, including the day that von Stauffenberg's attack took place.**

IMAGESSELECT





table, he said more and more often that he had great anxieties. He was usually talking more to himself than to us. Ever more frequently now, I would see his face wearing the grim, angry, harsh expression left on it by the preceding military briefing. 'It's hopeless making war with incompetent generals. I ought to follow Stalin's example. He purges his army ruthlessly.' And then, as if he had only just realised that we women didn't and ought not to understand such things, he would put his gloomy thoughts aside and switch to being a charming dinner companion," secretary Junge wrote.

### Führer kept going with injections

Following the Sixth Army's final defeat in Stalingrad in February 1943, Hitler's health deteriorated, and his personal doctor administered up to 20 daily injections, alternating between sedatives and stimulants to keep the Führer on his feet. An Austrian dietician was flown to the Wolf's Lair to prepare nutritious, vegetarian food to cure Hitler's stomach pains.

When General Guderian came back into favour in March 1943 and returned to the Wolf's Lair, he was shocked by Hitler's appearance: "His manner was less

assured than it had been and his speech hesitant. His left hand trembled, his back was bent, his gaze was fixed, his eyes protruded but lacked their former lustre," he later wrote.

### Security tightened

As news from the Eastern Front deteriorated, Hitler's disdain for his generals increased, accusing them of leaking sensitive information. When a report revealed that the soldiers at the front no longer believed in a German victory, he accused his generals of spreading pessimism through the ranks.

Fears of a plot against his life led Hitler to tighten security at his headquarters in late September 1943. Only the most important vehicles could enter the camp's inner security zone. Generals were stopped outside and escorted by armed guard to the Führer's bunker or conference room. The Allied bombings on Germany also led Hitler to fear an air raid on the Wolf's Lair.

"They know exactly where we are, and some time they're going to destroy everything here with carefully aimed bombs," he warned.

The Führer ordered Wolfsschanze's bunkers to be strengthened with five metres of reinforced concrete before leaving his headquarters for the Berghof in February 1944. He returned in July.

Despite relocating to the idyllic Alps, Hitler felt no significant benefit. The

deteriorating situation on all fronts was too great. After the Allies' arrival in Normandy, Germany was now threatened from the west.

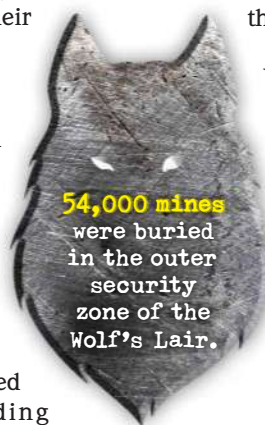
The heat and humidity at Wolfsschanze remained a nuisance and continued to eat away at the Führer. One day, he was so annoyed by a mosquito buzzing in his ear that he reprimanded his SS adjutant for not killing it. A few hours later, the adjutant found himself dismissed and on a troop train en route to the Eastern Front.

### Failed assassination attempt

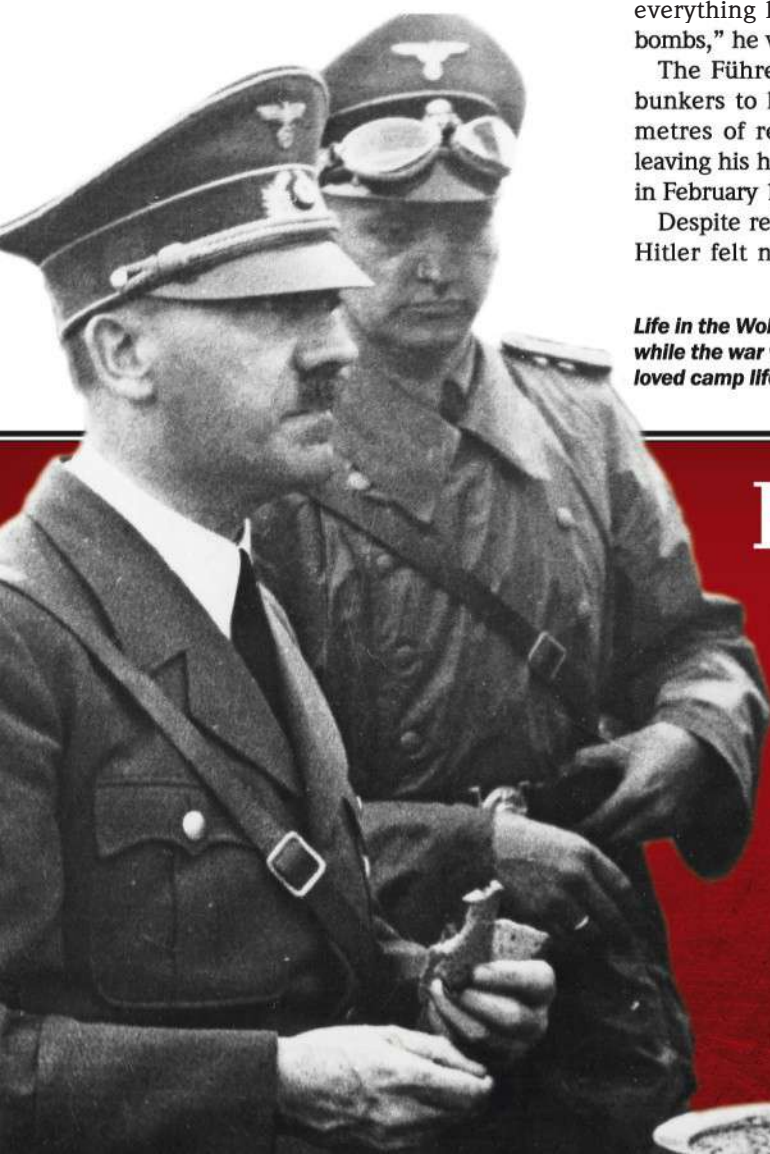
Just two days later, a bomb exploded in the temporary conference room where the daily war councils had been moved during the ongoing building work. A cabal of officers had plotted to remove the Führer, seize power and make peace.

But the bomb did not kill Hitler. On the contrary, it appeared to reinvigorate him. When one of his secretaries, Christa Schroeder, met the Führer within minutes of the attack in his bunker, he appeared to be his old self: "Believe me, this is the turning point for Germany," he said to her. "From now on, things will look up again. I'm glad the schweinehunde have unmasked themselves!"

The would-be assassins were hunted down and executed over the following few days, but the Führer's delight at his escape was brief. The war continued badly for the Germans – the Red Army was about to enter East Prussia, and Paris was liberated by the Allies – and in early September, Hitler broke down



*Life in the Wolf's Lair was monotonous, but while the war went well for Germany, Hitler loved camp life.*



## Hitler followed rigid routine

Cake and his dog Blondi provided the Führer's favourite diversions during his 800-plus days in the Wolf's Lair.

**H**itler adhered to rigid routines, and followed a fixed schedule that provided the equanimity required to make the raft of decisions his headstrong leadership required.

As relations with his generals deteriorated, Hitler isolated himself from the army leadership, who only saw him during daily briefings in the conference room. Instead, Hitler preferred to chat with his four female secretaries while eating cake. The tedium was only broken when heads of state or Nazi Party leaders visited the Führer.

ULLSTEIN BILD/RITZAU SCANPIX



completely. For several days, he lay in bed in his bunker, staring at the ceiling.

Other than his doctors, Hitler's personal aide Otto Günsche was the only one permitted to see Hitler while he was bedridden. He described his condition to Traudl Junge:

"The Führer is completely listless. We don't know what to do. Even the situation in the East doesn't interest him, although things are going very badly there."

Hitler's personal physician, who'd become sick himself and been forced to return to Germany, gave his instructions over the phone. Only after several injections did the Führer recover. He began to talk and asked for the latest situation reports from the Eastern Front.

### New super-bunker was barely used

Although still weak, Hitler moved into a new 'super-bunker' in Wolfsschanze. Measuring 36 x 36 metres, it was by far the largest in the camp, with a maze of hallways hidden behind its five-metre-thick walls.

In addition to Hitler's bedroom, office and bathroom, there was also a room for his personal aide. The dietician had her own small kitchen in the bunker so she could prepare the Führer's meals while the air sirens increasingly sounded outside. Soviet reconnaissance planes now flew over the forest on an almost daily basis to trigger the alarm in the Wolf's Lair. The SS troops on the roof of the camp's many bunkers manned their guns and awaited orders, but no shots were ever fired.

When Soviet aircraft flew over the Führer's headquarters at night, the lights

were turned off and everyone was ordered into the shelters. Getting there, however, was tricky.

Although the tree trunks were painted with white stripes to show the way, everyone found it difficult to find their shelters in the darkness of the forest.

However, no bombs were ever dropped on to the Wolf's Lair, which remained hidden from the enemy under the treetops and camouflage nets.

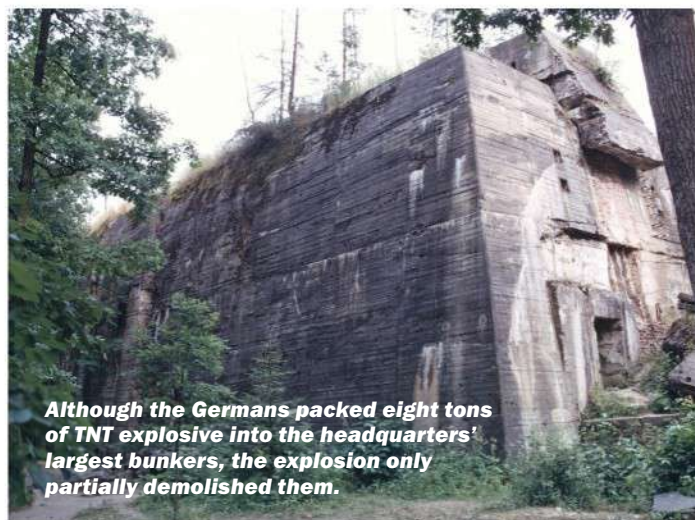
### Final escape

In late November 1944, Hitler decided to evacuate his headquarters. The Red Army was fast approaching Rastenburg, and US troops were crowding on the western German border.

On 20th November, Hitler boarded his special train. Sick, weak and disillusioned, the Führer cast one last glance at the Wolf's Lair before, with trembling hand and shuffling steps, he climbed aboard his saloon car.

Although the sun shone from a cloudless sky, Hitler headed towards Berlin with the blinds pulled down. The darkness made the saloon car reminiscent of a mausoleum.

"I never saw Hitler so depressed and distracted as he was that day. His voice hardly rose above a loud whisper; his eyes were lowered to his plate or stared



Although the Germans packed eight tons of TNT explosive into the headquarters' largest bunkers, the explosion only partially demolished them.

GETTY IMAGES

absently at some point on the white tablecloth. An oppressive atmosphere weighed down on the cramped, rocking cage in which we were gathered together," recalled Traudl Junge.

Until January 1945, Hitler continued to plan for a return to the Wolf's Lair and lead a decisive counteroffensive against the Soviet armies. Only when he received news that the Red Army was standing a few kilometres from the barbed wire surrounding his East Prussian headquarters did he give the order to blow Wolfsschanze up.

On 26th January, all the buildings were mined and blasted into the air before the last German troops hastily withdrew from the area.

### FURTHER READING

● I. Baxter: *Wolf's Lair: Inside Hitler's East Prussia HQ*, The History Press, 2009 ● M. Felton: *Guarding Hitler: The Secret World of the Führer*, Pen & Sword, 2014 ● Traudl Junge: *Until the Final Hour: Hitler's Last Secretary*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003 ● W. Gorriz: *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Wilhelm Keitel: Chief of The German High Command, 1938-1945*, Cooper Square Press, 2000.

**10.30:** Hitler rises late, gets dressed and exercises his German shepherd in Sperrkreis I.



Morning walk with Blondi

**11.45:** Hitler eats breakfast alone in his bunker.

**12.30:** In the conference room in Keitel's bunker, Hitler is informed of the war's progress.

**14.00:** Until the defeat at Stalingrad, Hitler has lunch with General Jodl, Field Marshal Keitel and Martin Bormann. After Stalingrad, he prefers to eat alone in his bunker.

**15.00-17.00:** Hitler meets or receives foreign guests, including Tsar Boris III of Bulgaria, Hungarian leader Miklós Horthy, and Marshal of Finland Carl Mannerheim.

**17.00:** Hitler invites his secretaries to take tea with him.

**19.30:** Hitler eats dinner in his private bunker – often carrot soup and mashed potatoes. His secretaries are his only company.

**22.00:** The day's last war update in the conference room.

**18.00:** The day's second war conference. On hot days, the meeting moves from Keitel's bunker to a building with better ventilation.

Lengthy monologues after dinner



**01.00-03.00:** Hitler drinks tea and bores his secretaries, Bormann and other yes-men with his hour-long monologues.

BBC



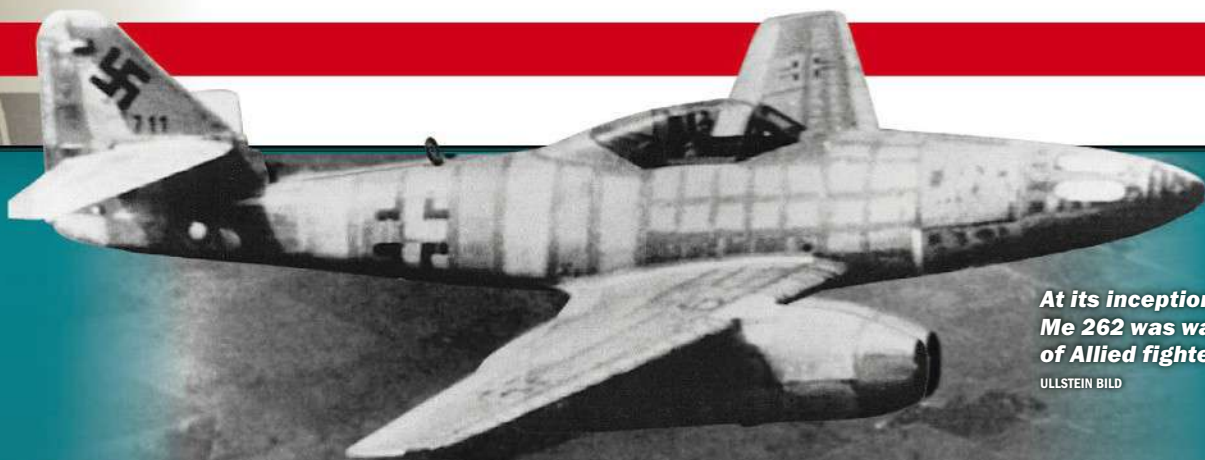


**The Allies did not win the war because they were the strongest force, but because Hitler was a hopeless military strategist. In fact, the Führer made so many foolish decisions that the US and British generals often called Hitler their best ally.**

BY MARTIN LANDIN

# HITLER'S **10** biggest blunders





At its inception, the Me 262 was way ahead of Allied fighter jets.

ULLSTEIN BILD

# 10 Used advanced jet fighters as bog-standard bombers

Hitler had a superior fighter in the Messerschmitt Me 262, but despite expert advice to the contrary, he insisted on using it as a bomber.

The Messerschmitt Me 262 was ahead of its time in many ways, not least because it was the first fighter in history to benefit from jet engines. With a length of just 10.6 m and a top speed of 900 km/h, the German-developed jet could out-manoeuvre the best Allied fighters of the period. In short, the Me 262 was just what the Luftwaffe needed in 1943 when the war was about to turn in the Allies' favour.

Impressed with the German-engineered prototype, Hitler ordered the lightning-fast aircraft into production – as a bomber. The developers protested that their wonder machine was wasted dropping bombs, but Hitler insisted. The result was a disaster. Even under

controlled conditions, the German pilots missed their targets by around a mile because the Me 262 was simply too fast for the pilots to accurately calculate the bomb's drop point.

By the time Hitler sent the planes into battle as fighter jets in 1944, the Germans had already lost the war.

## HOW BIG AN ERROR?

★★★★★  
Had the Me 262 been used as a fighter aircraft in 1943, the Germans could have taken control of European airspace.

## SPITFIRE WAS OUTCLASSSED

	MESSerschmitt ME 262 	SPITFIRE MK VB 
Type:	Fighter	Fighter
Engine:	2 x Junkers B-1-turbojet	1 x Rolls-Royce Merlin 45
Top speed:	900 km/h	595 km/h
Range:	1,050 km	805 km
Ceiling:	11,450 m	11,125 m
Rate of climb:	1,200 m/min	792 m/min

**British civilians paid dearly for Hitler's desire for revenge bombings.**

TOPFOTO/POLFOTO



## HOW BIG AN ERROR?

★★★★★  
The Battle of Britain was Hitler's first defeat and gave the Brits faith that victory was possible.

# 9 Gave the Royal Air Force time to recover

In June 1940, Hitler ordered an air offensive to prepare the way for an invasion of Britain. The Luftwaffe set about destroying the RAF's ability to resist. In a series of highly effective strikes, the Germans bombed command centres, fuel stores, aircraft factories and runways. In August 1940, the Luftwaffe was well on the way to achieving its goal – until Hitler interfered.

During an attack on a military target, a Luftwaffe bomber strayed off target and accidentally dropped its payload over central London. The British bombed Berlin in response. Furious, Hitler had the Luftwaffe begin a prolonged campaign of bombing British cities. This gave the RAF much-needed respite that eventually enabled its pilots to gain air supremacy over the British Isles.





## 8 Kept German women out of factories

While millions of Allied women helped keep their countries' industries going during the war, Hitler believed that women were unsuitable for factory work. Instead, they were expected to concentrate on caring for their homes and children. The Führer's conservative outlook led to a huge labour shortage at German factories when men were called to the front line. Hitler tried to keep his industry going with forced labour, but that only replaced 20 percent of the lost workforce. As the war progressed

and resources dwindled still further, Hitler permitted a small number of German women to contribute to the war effort by becoming telephone operators, nurses and secretaries. Others joined the workforce as SS guards in concentration camps.

*In the US, special posters encouraged women to work to help the war effort.*

AKG IMAGES



### HOW BIG AN ERROR?



Allowing women to work wouldn't have helped Germany win, but it could have delayed its defeat.

## 7 Tied his own air force's hands

On the night of 31 May 1942, the RAF sent around 1,000 bombers into Germany under the cover of darkness. The Luftwaffe were unable to detect the enemy aircraft at night and the RAF destroyed 13,000 buildings in Cologne on the first night alone.

The British continued to attack in this way for months – until German fighter planes began to hit the bombers as they landed at British airfields. This countermeasure worked beautifully, then Hitler stuck his nose in. He cancelled the successful ambushes and instead ordered that enemy aircraft be targeted over Germany, so that his people could take heart from seeing the British planes being shot down.

### HOW BIG AN ERROR?



Hitler's nonsensical order allowed the British to bomb Germany throughout the war.

## 6 Went to war with old weapons

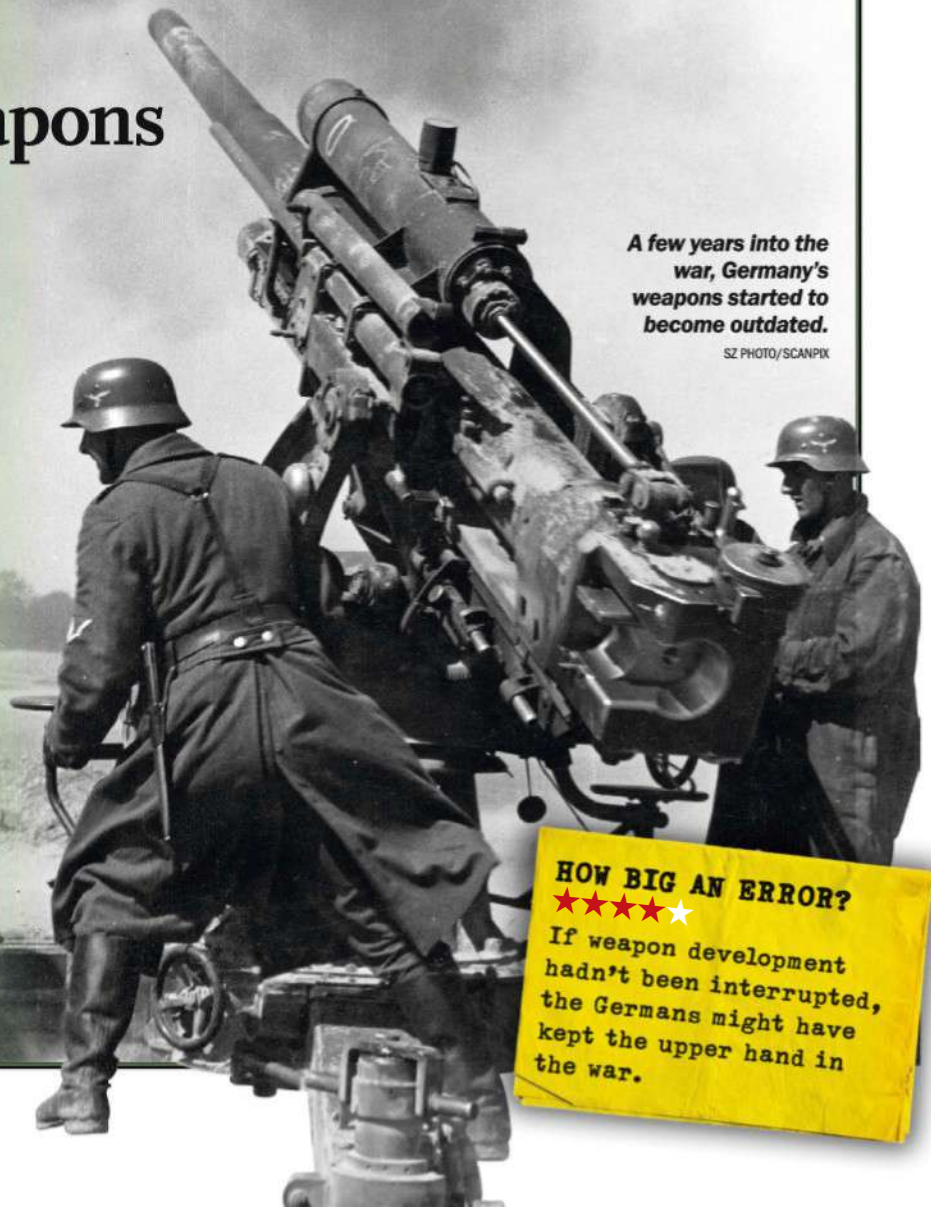
Hitler's confidence in his own abilities as a military strategist was cemented in the first years of the war. The annexation of Austria, the occupation of Czechoslovakia, the campaign in Poland, the lightning occupations of Denmark and Norway and the surrender of France in 1940 merely confirmed what Hitler had known all along: he was a tactical genius who knew better than his overly cautious command staff.

Buoyed by his early military successes – most of which were due to the enemy's hesitancy and ill-prepared armies – Hitler cancelled almost all German weapon programmes. The war could be won with existing weapons, Hitler insisted. But then the war really got going, and two years later the Nazis' weapons were becoming outdated in comparison to the enemy's.

Hitler ordered weapon development to resume, but two years had been lost and several key designers had died in the interim. Although the Germans still manufactured some groundbreaking weapons, none were produced in sufficient numbers – and those that did come into use suffered a host of teething troubles.

*A few years into the war, Germany's weapons started to become outdated.*

SZ PHOTO/SCANPIX



### HOW BIG AN ERROR?



If weapon development hadn't been interrupted, the Germans might have kept the upper hand in the war.



# 5 Refused to give up Stalingrad

German generals pleaded to make a tactical retreat from Stalingrad, but the Führer insisted they stay.

In December 1941, the German invasion of the Soviet Union had stalled, and Hitler gradually began to fear a repeat of Napoleon's disastrous defeat at Moscow in 1812. In order to force matters, he appointed himself commander-in-chief of the army.

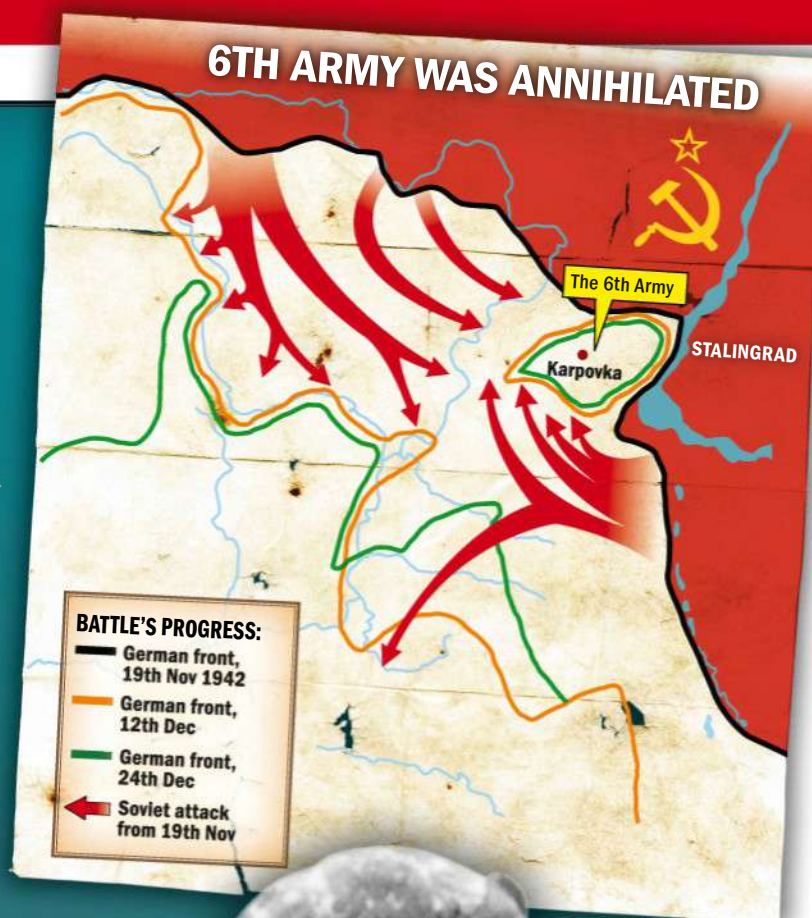
A few days later, Hitler issued an order for the German troops to stand firm at all costs – despite several of his most experienced generals proving on several occasions that a tactical retreat could lead to victory when facing a numerically superior enemy. Typically, such retreats could swiftly be turned into counterattacks once the chasing enemy's supply lines became too thinly stretched.

The standing order cost tens of thousands of German soldiers their lives, but Hitler firmly believed that his soldiers could win victory through sheer force of will. Half a year later,

Hitler had still not learned from his mistake and once again refused to allow troops to fall back during the 6th Army's attempt to occupy Stalingrad (now Volgograd). Hitler told his generals to hold their position despite them warning him that they were in danger of being encircled and overrun. He didn't listen. The 6th Army thus had the dubious honour of becoming the first German army to be surrounded and completely annihilated. The fighting at Stalingrad cost the Germans more than 180,000 men.

**Russian troops annihilated the German 6th Army at Stalingrad.**

AKG/SCANPIX & GETTY IMAGES



**HOW BIG AN ERROR?**  
★★★★★  
Hitler's irrational order to stand firm destroyed the German army's main advantage: mobility.





## 4 Waiting for an invasion that was already underway

At dawn on 6th June 1944, Allied aircraft bombed German defences in Normandy and tens of thousands of Allied soldiers waded ashore. While one of history's greatest invasions was underway, Hitler was at home sleeping. He didn't wake until 14.00 – even though he had known that an invasion was imminent. Hitler was convinced the D-Day landings were just a diversionary move. For weeks, Hitler

failed to send reinforcements to Normandy because he was waiting for the real invasion. In the meantime, the Allies gained a foothold in France and were soon on their way to Paris and Germany.

### HOW BIG AN ERROR?

★★★★★

Hitler's insistence on micromanaging his generals prevented them from driving back the enemy after D-Day.

The French in Normandy cheered on the Allies.

AGE/SCANPIX



### HOW BIG AN ERROR?

★★★★★

Without the Dunkirk veterans, the war would most likely have been over for the Brits.

365,000 British soldiers were evacuated across the English Channel because Hitler hesitated.



## 3 Failed to obliterate the British Army at Dunkirk

In May 1940, German tanks and soldiers stormed across the border and through the Netherlands, Belgium and northern France. In just ten days, Hitler's armoured units had reached the English Channel, pushing the British army into a corner of the coastal town of Dunkirk. Nazi General Ewald von Kleist, who was a few kilometres away with three armoured and two infantry divisions, believed that Dunkirk could be captured in less than a day. Then, suddenly, Hitler ordered all German units to halt. With the German war machine on pause, the British were able to conduct a large-scale evacuation. After nine days it was over: 365,000 soldiers had escaped across the Channel and Hitler lost the chance to wipe out the British army.

MEIANS/SCANPIX

## 2 Declared war on the USA

The day after Japan's attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in

December 1941, Ambassador Hiroshi Oshima eagerly tried to persuade Reichsminister of Foreign Affairs Joachim von Ribbentrop to declare war on the United States, but von Ribbentrop hesitated. The minister believed that entering into a war with the US would be suicidal for Germany.

Hitler disagreed. The Führer considered Japan as an invincible ally – and once the Empire had defeated the United States, it could turn its attention on the Soviet Union. Then Stalin would be forced to fight on two fronts, and with the

Soviet troops more thinly spread, Hitler would be able to capture Moscow with ease.

Three days later, Hitler made a declaration of war against the United States, fully expecting that most US forces would be deployed against the Japanese. To Hitler's surprise, President Franklin D Roosevelt sent most of his troops to Europe.

Even worse for Hitler, the troops Stalin had been holding in reserve to fight off any attack from Japan were now available to fight the Germans.

During a speech in the German Reichstag, Adolf Hitler foolishly declared war on the USA.



### HOW BIG AN ERROR?

★★★★★

If he hadn't declared war, Hitler could have avoided fighting the US for two or three years.

AGE/SCANPIX



# Invaded Russia in summer uniforms

The invasion of the Soviet Union – the largest in history – would be over in a few months, Hitler thought. He was wrong.

**1** “We only have to kick in the door and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down,” Hitler said before invading the Soviet Union in June 1941. His neighbour had a

larger army, but the Germans were better organised and had more experienced officers. Hitler’s disdain for the Soviets led him to believe the invasion would be over in a matter of months.

Initially, the invasion went well: the Soviets were surprised by Hitler’s attack. Five Soviet armies and over 2,000 aircraft were destroyed in the first week alone. But after four weeks, German supplies were exhausted, and the lightning invasion ground to a halt.

Meanwhile, in Berlin, Hitler refused his generals’ advice to

send troops directly to Moscow – a hub for Red Army supplies. Despite their protests, Hitler insisted on splitting his forces and launching an attack towards the Caucasus oil fields and the resource-rich Ukraine and Baltic states.

This meant that the Nazis only reached Moscow in December 1941 – just in time for the infamous Russian winter to paralyse their troops who were still wearing their summer uniforms. The German quartermasters had not planned for a icy campaign in Russia and therefore did not have enough winter uniforms to help their men survive the extreme temperatures, which often dipped to -30 degrees Celsius.

Hitler’s arrogant dismissal of both the Red Army and the Russian winter was a decisive factor in the war turning against the Axis powers. After their defeat in the Soviet Union, the war was truly lost for the Nazis.

German soldiers had to be inventive to survive the biting Russian cold.



## INVASION OF THE SOVIET UNION

	GERMANY 	SOVIET UNION 
Soldiers*	3,800,000	5,500,000
Tanks	4,300	15-25,000
Aircraft	4,389	11,357
Artillery	7,200	34,700
Horses	750,000	Unknown
Dead	> 800,000	> 4,000,000
Wounded	> 600,000	Unknown

\* The numbers of combatants, vehicles and dead are all uncertain.

STEEL HELMET protected a soldier’s head during the fighting, but provided no protection against the cold.

JACKET was made of wool and was extremely durable – but not very warm in winter.

TROUSERS were high-waisted and made of wool. They were quite practical in summer, but useless in winter.

BOOTS were leather and went up to the knees. Unlike the Russians’ boots, the Germans’ were not intended for use in snow.

Hitler planned to capture the Soviet Union in five weeks. As such, the German troops were not prepared for the winter.

AKG IMAGES

### HOW BIG AN ERROR?

★★★★★  
The invasion might have been over before winter set in if Hitler had listened to his generals.

#### FURTHER READING

● James P Duffy: *Hitler Slept Late and Other Blunders That Cost Him the War*, Praeger Publishers Inc, 1991 ● Ronald Lewin: *Hitler’s Mistakes*, Morrow New York, 1984 ● William L Shirer: *Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich*, Arrow, 1991





*Just hours after the attack, Hitler showed the bombed-damaged meeting room to Benito Mussolini.*





A black and white photograph showing a group of men in military uniforms. In the foreground, a man in a dark uniform and a peaked cap is looking down at a large map or document that is spread out on a table. Behind him, three other men in similar uniforms are looking on. The man in the center background is wearing a peaked cap and has a swastika armband. The man on the far right is also in uniform and looking towards the left. The background is a plain wall with a doorway visible.

# PLOT TO KILL HITLER

In July 1944, Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg carried a bomb into Hitler's headquarters in East Prussia. He was part of a plot to kill the Führer and end the war. In Berlin, a group of Stauffenberg's co-conspirators were waiting to seize control of Germany.





Realising that Germany's destruction is inevitable if Hitler continues the war, a group of German officers decide to risk everything to save the country they love. In July 1944, they devise a plan to assassinate the Führer. Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, will trigger a bomb inside Wolf's Lair: Hitler's East Prussian headquarters.

**T**HE AIR IN THE ROOM WAS STIFLING. Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg was sweating in his uniform. One bomb was already primed in his briefcase, but he had to prepare another if he wanted to be sure of eliminating the Führer.

He had just placed the second pack of explosives on the table when he heard a knock at the door. It was a guard who had been sent to hurry Stauffenberg to the conference. Panicking, Stauffenberg decided a single bomb would have to do, and placed the second, unarmed device in his adjutant's bag.

Hurriedly, the colonel followed the guard to the meeting. In his hand he carried the briefcase with the bomb inside. He felt confident that this time he'd succeed in assassinating Hitler. Only then could the war be stopped before it destroyed the Germany he loved.

Stauffenberg belonged to a circle of Wehrmacht officers from old, aristocratic German families who considered military service their patriotic duty. He was 25 years old when the Nazis came to power in 1933 and enthusiastically backed Hitler who promised to rebuild the military and restore Germany's honour after the humiliation of Versailles. His enthusiasm was short-lived, however. The Nazis' political methods and doctrine sickened him, but as



*Stauffenberg was awarded the German Cross in Gold for valour in 1943.*

an officer he felt he could not rebel against the country's leader – especially as he had sworn an oath not just to the army and the German people, but to Hitler himself.

When war broke out, Stauffenberg did his duty and was promoted and decorated for his valour. He was wounded in an Allied air strike in April 1943, losing his left eye, right hand and two fingers on his left hand, meaning he was no longer able to perform active service at the front. It was during his convalescence back home that the officer encountered a group of officers who shared his increasing concern about the way the war was developing.

The central character in this group was Major General Henning von Tresckow. From 1943, when the war started to turn against Germany, the officers began sharing their opinions with one another. They gradually became convinced that Hitler wasn't Germany's saviour, but was leading his people deeper into the morass of war. As defeat edged closer, the solution became clear: the dictator had to die and the Nazis removed from power.

### ASSASSINATION WOULD END THE WAR

By the early summer of 1944, the Tresckow circle were prepared for their coup d'état and now simply waited for the chance to assassinate Hitler. Stauffenberg had declared that he was ready to kill Hitler and the plan appeared to fall into place when he was appointed chief of staff of the *Ersatzheer* (Reserve Army) on 1st July 1944, thus gaining access to Hitler.

However, the Allied invasion of Normandy on 6th June 1944 and the Soviets' advance on the Eastern Front had forced the conspirators to consider whether a coup was necessary if defeat was imminent. Tresckow, however was committed to action: "The assassination must be attempted... the practical purpose no longer matters; what matters now is that the German resistance movement must take the plunge before the eyes of the world and of history."

On 20th July, Stauffenberg, newly appointed as colonel, was summoned from Berlin to a military conference at Wolf's Lair, Hitler's HQ in East Prussia. It was Stauffenberg's chance. He acquired two kilogrammes of explosives and prepared to assassinate the Führer. Afterwards, he would take a plane to Berlin and join Tresckow and the others, who were ready to seize power in the capital. The new government would then

**LUDWIG BECK**

NAME

TITLE GENERAL

1880-1944

**New head of German government**

In a protest against Hitler's planned war with Czechoslovakia, General Beck resigned as the chief of General Staff in 1938. He later became convinced that the entire Nazi leadership had to go and joined the conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. The conspirators appointed Beck as the person who would head the government following the coup.

➤ Supported Hitler until 1938.

➤ Was executed in 1944.



contact the Allies as soon as possible before more German soldiers and civilians were killed.

### HITLER'S CLOAK COVERED THE BODY

The meeting in Hitler's barracks was already underway when Stauffenberg arrived breathless, briefcase in hand. Hitler's chief of staff, Lieutenant General Heusinger was in the process of reviewing the situation on the Eastern Front. The 24 participants were huddled tightly around the strategic map Heusinger had spread on the heavy oak table. Stauffenberg placed his briefcase under the table then stood next to Hitler and pretended to follow the conversation. Under the pretence of taking a call, he left the room shortly after arriving and waited to hear the explosion, which was timed for 12.42. Even from several hundred metres away, the sound of the bomb was deafening. Amid clouds of smoke, a body was carried out on a stretcher covered by Hitler's cloak. Stauffenberg was in no doubt that the plan had succeeded: the Führer was dead.

The colonel got into his waiting car. His adjutant, Werner von Haeften, was behind the wheel, and drove him to the airfield where they would take a plane to Berlin to join their co-conspirators. On the way, they threw the unarmed bomb into the woods.

### TABLE LEG SAVED HITLER

Four men were killed and many more badly wounded by the explosion. Hitler himself had been leaning over the heavy table, close to one of its strong legs.

The leg saved the Führer's life: it absorbed most of the explosion's force and Hitler escaped with minor burns, burst eardrums and a few splinters. If Stauffenberg had placed the second unarmed bomb in his briefcase rather than in his adjutant's bag, it would still have ignited when the first bomb went off, killing everyone in the room.

Hitler viewed his miraculous escape as proof that a higher power wanted him to complete his destiny and build the Third Reich. As chaos spread throughout the barracks, he calmly strode to his private bunker to change clothes. He had to prepare for a meeting with fellow fascist leader Mussolini, who was expected by train that afternoon.

### BERLIN CONSPIRATORS WAIT

More than a hundred conspirators were ready to continue with the coup to end the Nazis' terror regime. The first part of the ►

## "Long live holy Germany!"

Claus von Stauffenberg's last words

Claus von Stauffenberg

*A few days before the attack, Stauffenberg was at Wolf's Lair, where Hitler met General Karl Bodenschatz.*



## THE ROOM PLAN

# Bomb was moved

Hitler could have been killed when the bomb exploded if Stauffenberg's briefcase hadn't been moved next to a heavy table leg by one of the conference's participants.



Reconstruction of Stauffenberg's briefcase with two bombs, only one of which was used, along with two detonators.



chain was Erich Fellgiebel, chief signal officer for the army and Wehrmacht high command. Fellgiebel's job was to call from the Führer's headquarters to Berlin, confirming the attack had been successful. He would then close the Wolf's Lair's communications centre, so that the Nazis couldn't contact the outside world.

In Berlin, the conspirators were preparing for the Reserve Army to take control. The order would need to be made formally by Colonel General Friedrich Fromm, Stauffenberg's superior and the commander-in-chief of the Reserve Army. Although not officially part of the conspiracy, he knew what

Stauffenberg, Tresckow and the others were planning and had hinted that he approved of the coup.

## OPERATION VALKYRIE USED FOR THE COUP

The conspirators intended to take control by subverting an emergency plan codenamed Operation Valkyrie. The plan had been approved by Hitler and was designed to be enacted in case of an uprising by the millions of prisoners of war, foreign forced labourers and concentration camp inmates being held in the Third Reich. According to detailed instructions laid out in the Valkyrie plan, the Reserve Army would seize power,



# “The assassination must be attempted... the German resistance movement must take the plunge before the eyes of the world”

Henning von Tresckow, German general, to Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg

secure the government's headquarters in Berlin and deal with 'internal unrest'.

Over the previous months, Stauffenberg had reworked Valkyrie to allow the conspirators to take over by mobilising the Reserve Army and using it to provide military backing for the coup. At the same time, he'd also been in contact with the civilian resistance movement to help shape the foundations of a new Germany after Hitler.

The coup would commence with a declaration of a state of emergency to justify the Reserve Army seizing power. After that, the army would disarm the SS and police while also taking ministers and party leaders prisoner. The Reserve Army would also take control of radio stations to broadcast the declaration of martial law.

The conspirators had written their declaration in advance. It began with the words, “The Führer Adolf Hitler is dead!” and continued with a cover story claiming several party leaders and the SS had staged a coup that had forced the Reserve Army to take power.

The declaration also promised that the war would be halted with a negotiated settlement, that the people would be involved in drafting a new constitution and that those held responsible for the crimes of the Nazi regime would be punished. The declaration had to rally popular support for the coup and ensure law and order. However, the conspirators were far from having the situation under control.

## HITLER'S FATE IS REVEALED

A few minutes after the bomb exploded in Hitler's barracks, their carefully prepared plans began to fall apart. From the Wolf's Lair, a dismayed Fellgiebel had to inform his colleagues in Berlin that “something fearful has happened – the Führer's alive”. After that, all communications from the headquarters were severed – only the most senior Nazis were now be able to get in touch with the outside world.

Meanwhile, Stauffenberg continued unsuspecting to the airfield. His plane took the air at 13.15 and in the two hours it took to reach Berlin, he was out of the loop. The news that Hitler had survived began to be disseminated at 13.25, just ten minutes after Stauffenberg's plane took off from East Prussia.

The conspirators at the Reserve Army's headquarters at Bendlerblock in Berlin were paralysed. The lieutenant general, who'd received Fellgiebel's message of the failed assassination attempt, went to lunch without informing the other officers, and time passed without Operation Valkyrie being put into effect.

Only when Stauffenberg called from Berlin airport to announce Hitler was dead did Colonel Albrecht Mertz von

Quirnheim, Stauffenberg's successor as chief of staff, trigger part of the operation on his own initiative. But his own superior, General Friedrich Olbricht, was unaware of this and issued separate orders for Fromm to mobilise Operation Valkyrie. During the confusion, however, Fromm had managed to contact staff at Wolf's Lair and had been assured that Hitler was alive and mostly well. He therefore refused to act on Olbricht's demands.

Indeed, as it dawned on Fromm that Mertz had triggered Valkyrie outside the normal chain of command, he became furious and threatened to imprison him. Instead, it was Fromm who found himself placed under house arrest by Stauffenberg, who'd finally arrived in Berlin.

The conspirators continued with the plan, the next step of which was to broadcast news of the coup by radio. But once again problems arose, not least because the conspirators lacked the technical expertise to get the message out. Infuriatingly for the conspirators, Germany's radio stations continued to broadcast popular music to an unsuspecting population. The Führer's headquarters had no such trouble getting its message across.

## CHAOS CONTINUES THROUGH THE EVENING

At 18.28, the radio stations broadcast a special announcement about the attack and Hitler's lucky escape. Meanwhile, the Führer's inner circle was busy ensuring that it retained control of all military and political departments – while also trying to identify the culprits. Confusion reigned among the army units. In many places, the message from the East Prussian headquarters arrived before the conspirators' ►



*Camouflage was used to conceal Wolf Lair's, thereby protecting it from attack by Soviet bombers among others.*





orders, some of which arrived several hours after leaving Bendlerblock in Berlin. Groups from the Reserve Army, which Operation Valkyrie had sent onto the streets, were ordered to return to barracks.

### ARREST GOEBBELS

One of the conspirators' order that was still being followed was the one that dispatched ardent Nazi and chief of infantry regiment Grossdeutschland Major Otto Ernst Remer to arrest propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. Believing that Hitler was dead and that the arrest of the propaganda minister was required to prevent a mutiny, Remer set off, gun in hand, to Goebbels' office. But when the minister handed Remer a telephone on which he had called the Wolf's Lair and Remer heard Hitler's voice at the other end, he realised that he'd been had by the conspirators and that Hitler was still very much alive. The Führer then ordered the duped regiment commander to crush the rebellion "by any means necessary".

Remer was happy to oblige and dispatched a battle group to Bendlerblock, where Stauffenberg was trying to keep the coup going. But the colonel knew that the game was up. He spent the evening on the phone appealing to his supporters, but they fell away one by one when they realised Hitler was alive.

In the meantime, a group of heavily armed officers faithful to Hitler assembled at Bendlerblock where the conspirators were based. They quickly overcame the resistance there with the help of Remer's troops. Hearing them approaching, Stauffenberg put down the phone. A few minutes later he was

## "Something fearful has happened – the Führer's alive!"

Erich Fellgiebel, chief of Wehrmacht communications

under arrest after being shot in the shoulder.

Hitler's supporters freed Fromm from his house arrest, and he immediately court-martialled the leaders of the coup. Stauffenberg and his adjutant, Haeften, Olbricht, his chief of staff, Mertz, and

General Ludwig Beck were all sentenced to death. Beck was permitted to put a gun to his own head. The others were dragged out into a courtyard. As he passed, Fromm's secretary heard Stauffenberg say, "They've all left me in the lurch."

Together the condemned were lined up in front of a pile of sand and – in the glow from the headlights of a military vehicle – were shot one after the other by officers from the guard battalion. Just before being shot, Stauffenberg's uttered his last words: "Long live holy Germany!"

### GESTAPO HUNTED THE LAST CONSPIRATORS

Even before the bodies fell back into the sand, the Gestapo was in action looking for accomplices. The first were soon arrested, their assets seized as evidence. Arrest followed arrest. Many were taken simply because they were family or friends of the conspirators and couldn't prove they knew nothing about the assassination plot.

A total of 180 people were executed for their role in the coup – the last in April 1945, weeks before Germany surrendered. Many more spent months in concentration camps, including Stauffenberg's wife, Nina, then pregnant with her fifth child. In all, Hitler's war would cost 55 million people their lives. ■

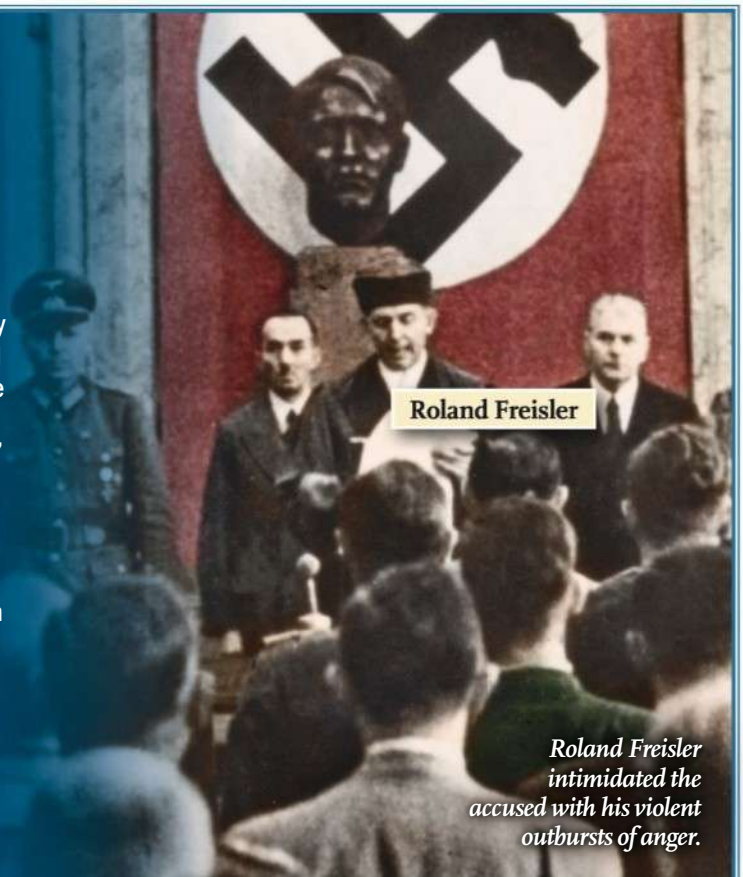
## Feared judge sentenced conspirators to death

Anyone remotely connected with the coup was tried and sentenced at show trials presided over by Nazi judge Roland Freisler.

**A**s officers, the accused should only have been tried by a military court, but Hitler believed that was too good for them. "The lowest creatures in history ever to wear the soldier's uniform" should not die with honour by firing squad, he declared, "they must all be hanged like cattle."

The trial was pure theatre. The accused were not permitted to arrange their own defence and did not get a transcript of the verdict. As officers, they were used to being immaculately dressed in uniform, but during the trial, they were stripped of ties, belts and even false teeth to make them appear shabby and undisciplined.

The judge, Roland Freisler, was an ardent Nazi and notorious for humiliating and threatening those who came before him. Freisler rarely let the accused speak before he mockingly answered the question that had been put to them. A total of 180 people were executed following the assassination attempt.



Roland Freisler

*Roland Freisler intimidated the accused with his violent outbursts of anger.*



# Hitler survived 40 assassination plots

There were up to 40 assassination plots against Hitler between 1933 and 1945. In addition to the bomb at Wolf's Lair, German officers attempted to carry out four other attacks between 1943 and 1944.

## 1ST ATTEMPT

### Cold prevented bomb's detonation

**13th March 1943**, officers General Henning von Tresckow and lawyer Fabian von Schlabrendorff placed a bomb of British explosives aboard an aircraft that was due to transport Hitler from the Eastern Front to his military headquarters in Rastenburg, East Prussia (now Ketrzyn in Poland). The bomb was camouflaged as a box containing two bottles of Cointreau. The plan was for the package to detonate over enemy territory, which would make the crash difficult to investigate. However, the bomb did not go off. It's believed that the explosives failed due to the low air temperature.

*Assassins tried to kill Hitler as he was flying from the Eastern Front, but the bomb was too cold to detonate.*

## 2ND ATTEMPT

### Hasty visit saved the Führer

On **21st March 1943**, Colonel Rudolf Christoph von Gersdorff tried to kill Hitler while accompanying him on a tour of captured Soviet equipment in Berlin. Initially he had hoped to plant a bomb at the exhibition, but security was too tight. He therefore resolved to carry the bomb on his person and detonate it while next to the Führer. The colonel believed Hitler would spend 20 minutes at the exhibition and had set the bomb to detonate 10 minutes after the Nazi leader's arrival. However, despite Gersdorff's attempts to waylay him, the Führer sped through the site in just two minutes and then was gone.

*Senior Nazi figures often surrounded Hitler during official visits*

### Officer banned from meeting

On **11th March 1944**, junior officer Eberhard von Breitenbuch, planned to shoot Hitler with a 7.65-mm Browning pistol that he would hide in his pocket for a meeting at the leader's alpine home. But shortly before the meeting, Hitler banned low-ranking officers from attending, depriving Breitenbuch of his chance to kill the Führer, but also saving his life as he would probably have been killed himself by Hitler's SS guards.

## 4TH ATTEMPT

*Breitenbuch planned to use a pistol hidden in his trouser pocket.*

## 3RD ATTEMPT

### Allied air strike disrupted assassination attempt

In **December 1943**, Major Axel von dem Bussche planned to assassinate Hitler while presenting a new winter uniform for the troops. He intended to carry a modified landmine with a quick-release hand grenade detonator in his pocket that he would trigger while embracing Hitler. However, the presentation was cancelled when the train wagon transporting the new uniforms was hit during an Allied air raid on Berlin.

*A modified landmine with a quick-release hand grenade detonator might have killed Hitler in December 1943.*





*This photograph from the garden of the Reich Chancellery is probably the last to show Adolf Hitler.*

Adolf Hitler







# HITLER'S FINAL HOURS

As the Allies advance through Germany, Adolf Hitler holes himself up in a bunker deep beneath Berlin. In his final days, the Führer's aides witness his birthday, wedding and suicide.





World War II is approaching its end. Advancing Russian forces and Allied aircraft constantly bombard Berlin, forcing Hitler to move permanently into the Führerbunker. With him are his personal staff and loyal supporters who have served him for years. Eyewitness accounts reveal what happens during his final days.

**H**ITLER HAS SPENT MOST OF THE WAR at his personal residence in the Bavarian Alps or in the Wolf's Lair in East Prussia, but as the enemy closes in, the Führer retreats to Berlin, where he first takes up lodging in the Reich Chancellery before relocating to the bunker beneath. His mistress, Eva Braun, decides to join him.

### MONDAY, 16TH APRIL 1945

For several months, the Red Army has been preparing to storm Berlin. Now 2.5 million Soviet soldiers launch their final offensive from the east bank of the River Oder.

*Bodyguard Rochus Misch:* Sometime in mid-April, 'bunker life' began. Hitler descended into the place where he would die. Eva never left his side. All situation conferences were now held in the Führerbunker map room, and the bunker telephone switchboard had to be manned around the clock. Our SS bodyguard commander Franz Schädle came up to me: "Misch, you are going down there with them."

I was surrounded by cold, damp, glaring white artificial light. To know that Hitler had to live and suffer under the same conditions was of little comfort. Or should I say, it gave me no comfort? Now it was no longer time to think of others, not even the Führer.

**"The only hope of saving our own skins would come after Hitler's death."**

*Rochus Misch, Hitler's bodyguard*

One had one's own problems to attend to.

*Armaments Minister Albert Speer:* Even during this last period of his life, in April 1945, I still occasionally sat with Hitler in the bunker bent over the building plans for Linz, mutely contemplating the dreams of yesteryear. His study, roofed with more than sixteen feet of concrete and topped with six feet of

earth, was undoubtedly the safest place in Berlin. When heavy bombs exploded in the vicinity this massive bunker shook... Hitler would give a start. What had become of the formerly fearless corporal of the First World War?

### FRIDAY 20TH APRIL

On the Western Front, US troops occupy Nuremberg. Berlin remains under intense fire from the Soviets.

*Chauffeur Erich Kempka:* On the Führer's fifty-sixth birthday, 20th April 1945, I reflected on past years when the German people celebrated this day, and held great receptions and parades. When first employed in 1932 I dreamed of being his chauffeur and constant companion on the road, to have a modest place in his attempts for peaceful solutions to the problems we faced.

*Albert Speer:* A delegation of Hitler Youth who had fought well was presented to him in the garden. Hitler spoke a few words, patted one or another of the boys. His voice was low. He broke off rather abruptly.

*Secretary Traudl Junge:* In the evening we sat crammed together in the little study. Hitler was silent, staring into space. We too asked him if he wouldn't leave Berlin. "No, I can't," he replied. "I must bring things to a head here in Berlin – or go under!"

Hitler had now said out loud what we had all seen: he himself no longer believed in victory. He retired early, and the birthday party broke up. But Eva Braun came back... A restless fire burned in her eyes. She had on a new dress made of silvery blue brocade. Eva Braun wanted to numb the fear that had awoken in her heart. She wanted to celebrate again; she wanted to dance, to drink, to forget.

Eva Braun carried off everyone she met on her way through the bunker up to her old living room on the first floor which was still intact... Someone produced an old gramophone from somewhere with a single record. "Blood-red roses speak of happiness to you..." Eva Braun whirled everyone away in a desperate frenzy, like a woman who has already felt the faint breath of death. We drank champagne, there was shrill laughter, and I laughed too because I didn't want to cry. In the



News of Hitler's death appeared in Western newspapers on 2nd May 1945.



midst of this an explosion silenced the party for a moment, someone hurried to the phone, gleaned more important news. But no one said anything about war, victory or death. This was a party given by ghosts. And the red roses kept on speaking of happiness... I suddenly thought I might throw up any minute.

#### **SATURDAY, 21ST APRIL**

**Soviet shells continue to rain down on the Reich Chancellery garden that lies on top of the Führerbunker.**

*Rochus Misch:* The last months had not passed Hitler by without leaving their mark. Every defeat, every setback, every act of treason – real or imagined – from within his closest circle contributed to his clearly recognisable physical decay. Now his gait was sluggish, and he dragged a leg. The eyes often seemed to have no fixed point, while his sense of balance seemed disturbed. Above all, in his every movement he had slowed, and all in all he looked to me like an old man.

#### **SUNDAY, 22ND APRIL**

**Soviet soldiers occupy the districts of Pankow and Karl Horst. The inner defence ring is pierced, and Hitler allows some of his staff to leave. A plane stands ready to evacuate them.**

*Rochus Misch:* At some time or other the long sleepless night ended in morning. I had nodded off again and was trying to keep myself awake with cognac and chocolate. The situation was more hopeless with every passing minute... Hitler's hoped-for breach between the Western Powers and the Russians had not come about.

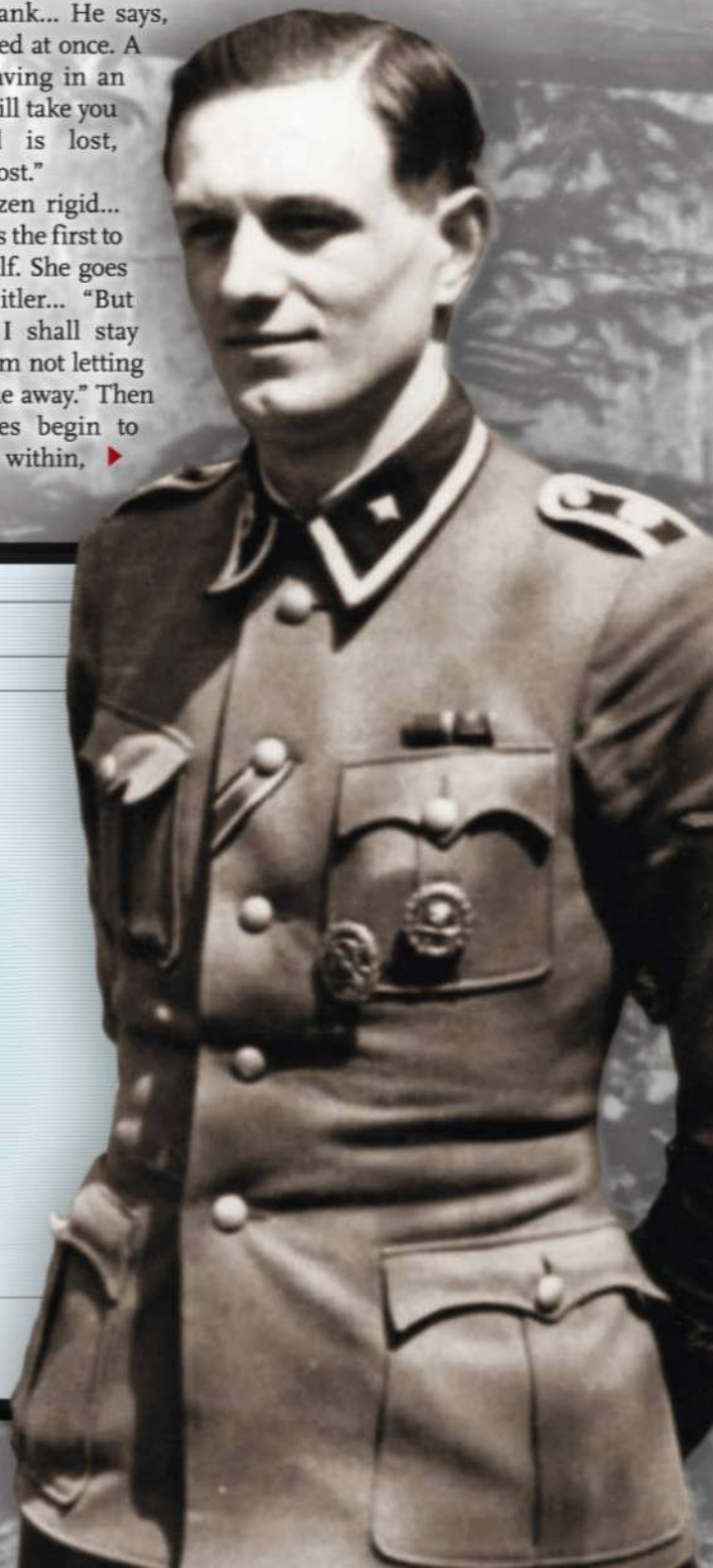
I had the commander-in-chief of the Ninth Army, General Theodor Busse, on the line, and I connected him to [General

of the Infantry Wilhelm] Burgdorf... I listened in to the whole conversation – contrary to regulations. I was hoping to find a few sparks of hope, but I found none.

The telephone rang again. Our chief Franz Schädle was on the other end of the line. I had been noting down the main points of reports mentally. For this reason, I extracted only fragments... "Machine – fly out – place reserved, fetch your wife". Suddenly I was wide awake. A place had been reserved for my wife and daughter in one of the last aircraft to leave Berlin... It was almost incredible. I was quite overcome.

*Traudl Junge:* Feverish restlessness in the bunker... The doors of Hitler's conference room are closed. There's an agitated discussion in progress behind them... At last the heavy iron door opens... Hitler stands motionless... All the expression has vanished from his face; his eyes are blank... He says, "Get changed at once. A plane is leaving in an hour and will take you south. All is lost, hopelessly lost."

I am frozen rigid... Eva Braun is the first to rouse herself. She goes towards Hitler... "But you know I shall stay with you. I'm not letting you send me away." Then Hitler's eyes begin to shine from within, ▶



1917-2013



NAME

**ROCHUS MISCH**

TITLE

HITLER'S BODYGUARD

## **Loyal soldier was imprisoned in Russia**

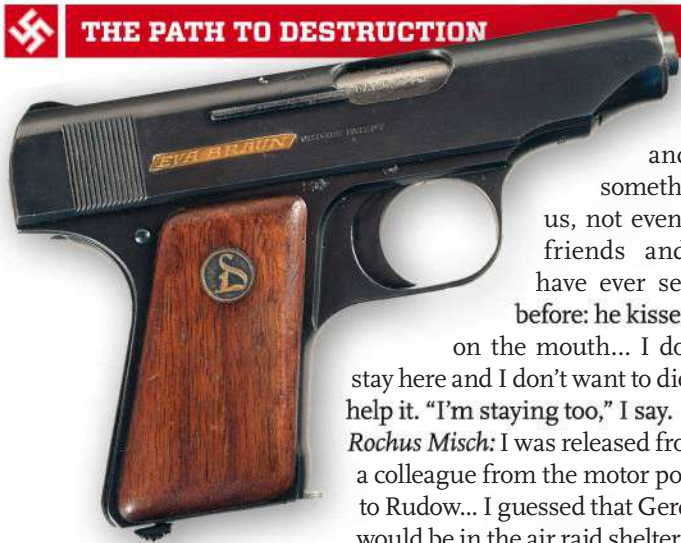
During the invasion of Poland in 1939, Sergeant Rochus Misch was shot and seriously wounded in the stomach. After staying in several hospitals, he spent six weeks in a convalescent home in the Alps. Here, he was invited to apply for a position in the FBK (Führer Escort Command), Hitler's personal SS bodyguard. Misch spent the rest of the war close to Hitler and became his most trusted bodyguard. FBK members were the only ones allowed to bear arms in Hitler's presence.

Misch was brutally interrogated by the Russians after he was captured in 1945. After his return to Berlin in 1953, he bought a small business, which he ran successfully for many years.

Misch gave many interviews to media from around the world before his death. He claimed to know nothing about the extermination of Jews and remained loyal to Adolf Hitler to the last: "He was no brute. He was no monster. He was no superman," he said in 2005.

- ▶ Was orphaned at two years old and grew up with his grandparents.
- ▶ Remained in Berlin after the war because his wife would not leave.





*Hitler gave a gun to Eva Braun, and as far as we know, she used it.*

and he does something none of us, not even his closest friends and servants, have ever seen him do before: he kisses Eva Braun

on the mouth... I don't want to stay here and I don't want to die, but I can't help it. "I'm staying too," I say.

*Rochus Misch:* I was released from duty and a colleague from the motor pool drove me to Rudow... I guessed that Gerda and Gitta would be in the air raid shelter... Gerda fell into my arms straight away. Her reaction to my life-saving news came as a terrible blow to me. She shook her head... Brigitta, our one year-old daughter, had a

high fever. Furthermore, she did not want to leave her parents alone in Berlin. I tried to persuade her, mentioned the atrocities committed by the Russians against civilians in East Prussia. But I failed to convince her. "It is the last chance, Gerda," I implored. "The very last!" But she had decided. My wife shook her head sadly.

### MONDAY, 23RD APRIL

A telegram arrives from Hermann Göring. He wants to know whether Hitler still has 'freedom of action' to lead the country's defence. If not, Göring will take over. Hitler shrieks betrayal and orders the Reichsmarschall's arrest.

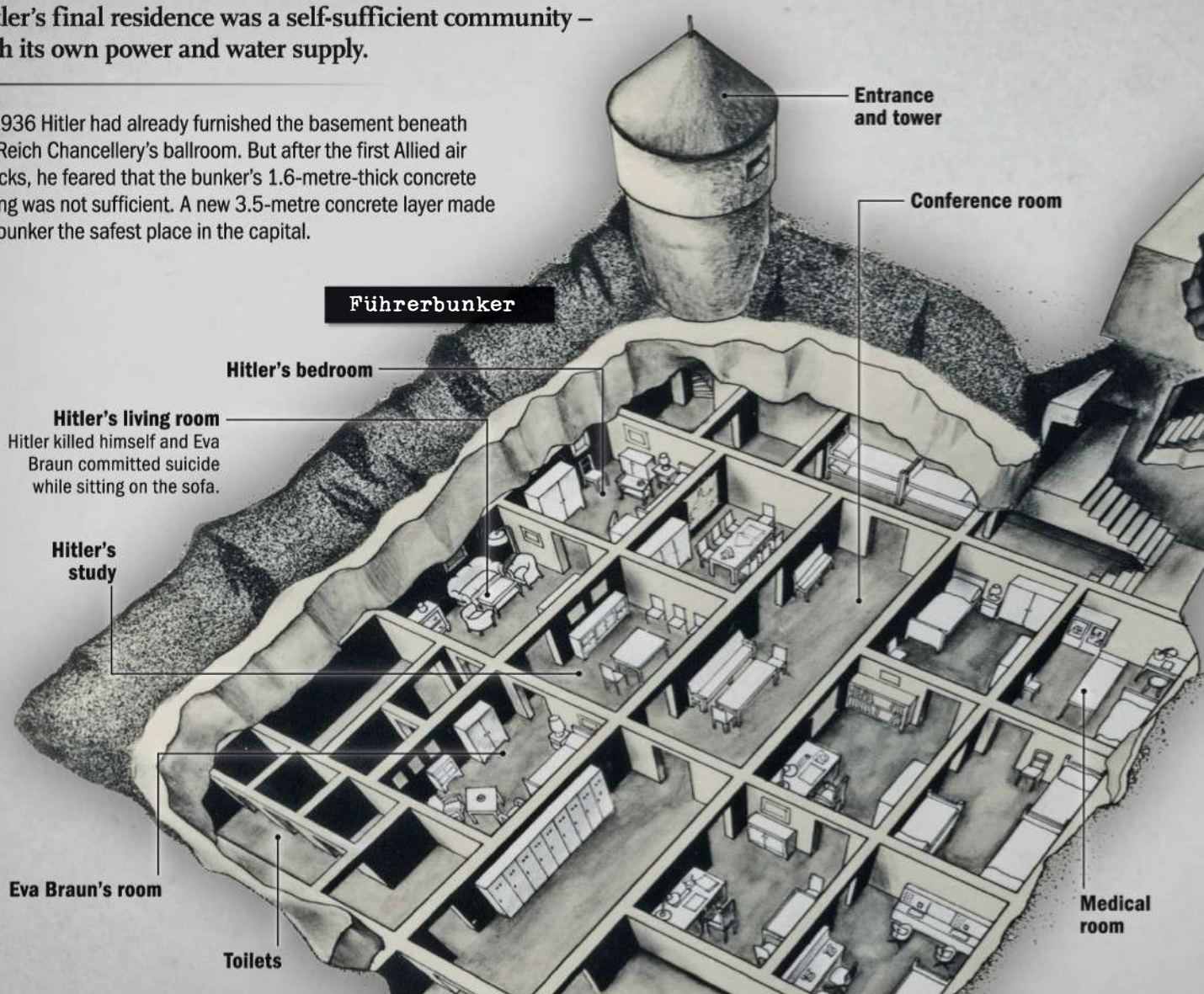
*Erich Kempka:* This telegram... came as a bombshell. Since the failure of the Luftwaffe leadership, there had been a poor relationship between Hitler and the Reichsmarschall... None

## HEADQUARTERS

# Bunker was safest place in Berlin

Hitler's final residence was a self-sufficient community – with its own power and water supply.

By 1936 Hitler had already furnished the basement beneath the Reich Chancellery's ballroom. But after the first Allied air attacks, he feared that the bunker's 1.6-metre-thick concrete ceiling was not sufficient. A new 3.5-metre concrete layer made the bunker the safest place in the capital.



**Führerbunker**

**Hitler's bedroom**

**Hitler's living room**

Hitler killed himself and Eva Braun committed suicide while sitting on the sofa.

**Hitler's study**

**Eva Braun's room**

**Toilets**

**Entrance and tower**

**Conference room**

**Medical room**



of us had dreamed that Göring would send such a message, however, for he was almost dictating to Hitler.

*Traudl Junge:* None of us can sleep. We wander round the rooms like shadows, waiting. Sometimes we slip upstairs... horrified to see the devastation spreading further and further.

## TUESDAY, 24TH APRIL

**Hitler gives orders to transform the Nazi parade ground's East-West axis into a makeshift runway.**

*Rochus Misch:* Those among us, who were here by virtue of their services being indispensable, knew only too well that the only hope of saving our own skins would come after Hitler's death. Therefore we waited for it.

## THURSDAY, 26TH APRIL

**Göring's successor as Reichsmarschall is found. Field Marshal Ritter von Greim flies from Munich to Berlin to take up his**

**post. Ace test pilot Hanna Reitsch flies him into Berlin on the last leg of his journey.**

*Pilot Hanna Reitsch:* Suddenly, from the ground, out of the shadows, from the tree-tops themselves, leapt the very fires of Hell, concentrating from every quarter on us, seemingly us alone. Below, Russian tanks and soldiers were swarming among the trees. I could see clearly the men's faces, as rifles, Tommy-guns and anti-tank weapons were raised and fired at us. We were haloed and flanked and underlined with innumerable and deadly little explosive puffs.

Then, suddenly, there was a rending crash – I saw a yellowy-white flame streak up beside the engine and, at the same time, Greim shouted that he was hit – an armour-piercing bullet had smashed through his right foot [and he] lay crumpled in his seat, unconscious... Again and again we were hit. With a spasm of terror, I caught sight of petrol running from both wing-tanks. An explosion, I thought, was inevitable, should have happened already. And still the plane answered the controls and still I remained untouched.

We were now approaching the Radio Tower and the evil-smelling, sulphurous air whirled thicker and thicker with smoke, dust and fumes. Visibility was almost nil. The ground-fire was slackening and the area seemed, at any rate, to be still in German hands.

Von Greim had meanwhile regained consciousness and, with great difficulty, I helped him out of the machine, which might at any moment be spotted and attacked. He sat down at the side of the road. Now we could only wait and wait, on the off-chance that some vehicle might come our way—we could only hope it would not be a Russian one.

*Traudl Junge:* Hanna Reitsch is a small, delicate, very feminine person, you'd never have thought she had such masculine courage. She wears the Iron Cross on her smooth black rollneck sweater. Greim limps into the bunker on one leg, leaning on her shoulder... Hanna Reitsch hurries to see the Führer. She must have been one of those women who adored Hitler unconditionally, without reservations.

## FRIDAY, 27TH APRIL

**The Red Army has reached Alexanderplatz, just a few kilometres from the Führerbunker. Speer is asked to explain why he has failed to fulfil Hitler's command to destroy the German factories.**

*Albert Speer:* I felt considerable apprehension when I was led into Hitler's office deep underground. He was alone, received me frostily... and in a sharp, low voice immediately came to the point: 'Bormann has given me a report on your conference with the Ruhr Gauleiters. You pressed them not to carry out my orders and declared that the war is lost. Are you aware of what must follow from that?'

As if he were reminded of something remote, his voice softened... and almost in the tone of a normal person he added: 'If you were not my architect, I would take the measures that are called for in such a case.'

## SATURDAY, 28TH APRIL

**The Führerbunker is now almost cut off from the outside world. Hitler's staff listen to the BBC as it announces that SS**



*A gun was found on the couch where Eva Braun took poison, and Adolf Hitler shot himself.*

Entrance

### BUNKER WAS DAMP

- The Führerbunker was part of the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, which was the official office of the German Chancellor from 1878 to 1945.
- The bunker lay below the water table making it damp and clammy. A system of pumps kept the groundwater out, while a diesel generator supplied electricity to the entire facility.
- Hitler moved into the Führerbunker permanently in January 1945.
- After the war, the Russians destroyed most of the bunker.

FACTS





leader Heinrich Himmler has held secret peace talks with Swedish diplomat Folke Bernadotte.

*Rochus Misch:* "For a moment Hitler lost his self-control. It was loud – I could hear his voice above the telephone calls I was dealing with: 'Himmler of all people, Himmler of all people!'"

The whole thing reminded me of his reaction to Hess's defection to Britain in 1941. Hitler called Hanna Reitsch and Ritter von Von Greim to him. They were to arrest Himmler. *Hanna Reitsch:* Dispatch-riders reported that the Axis was clear of shell craters for four hundred yards, but that the situation might alter at any moment. Though enemy searchlights were groping continually up and down the Axis we managed to take off without being spotted and headed towards the Brandenburg Gate... We flew on, undisturbed by spasmodic tracer fire, and in about a mile reached the welcoming protection of a cloud-bank.

#### SUNDAY, 29TH APRIL

**In Italy, partisans execute Mussolini and his mistress. The news fills Hitler with terror.**

*Rochus Misch:* Shortly after midnight I saw a man in the bunker whom I had never seen before. "Who is that then?" I asked. "That is the registrar."

In this manner I heard of the planned marriage of Hitler to Eva Braun... There were a few well-wishers present to toast the newly-weds [but] I remained at my workplace and considered how I should now greet Eva when I met her. 'Frau

# "Suddenly I feel something like hatred and helpless anger rise in me."

*Traudl Junge, Hitler's secretary*

Hitler' – that did not seem possible.

*Traudl Junge:* The Führer comes towards me... "There's something I'd like you to take down from dictation." I sit down alone at the big table and wait... Then, suddenly, the Führer utters the first words. "My political testament."

For a moment my hand trembles. Now, at last, I shall hear what we've been waiting for... an explanation of what has happened, a confession, even a confession of guilt, or perhaps a justification... But my expectations are not fulfilled. In tones of indifference, almost mechanically, the Führer comes out with the explanations, accusations and demands that I, the German people and the whole world know already.

#### MONDAY, 30TH APRIL

**Inside the Reichstag, just a few hundred metres from the Führerbunker, Soviet and German soldiers battle fiercely.**

*Traudl Junge:* [Hitler's adjutant, Otto] Günsche comes up to me. "Come on, the Führer wants to say goodbye." I rise and go out into the corridor... I vaguely realise there are other people there too. But all I really see is the figure of the Führer. He comes very slowly out of his room, stooping more than ever, stands in the open doorway and shakes hands with everyone. I feel his right hand warm in mine, he looks at me but he isn't seeing me...

He says something to me, but I don't hear it... Only when Eva Braun comes over to me is the spell broken a little. She smiles and embraces me. "Please do try to get out. You may yet make your way through. And give Bavaria my love," she says, smiling but with a sob in her voice... Like that, she





follows the Führer into his room – and to her death. The heavy iron door closes.

*Erich Kempka:* I was in one of the less damaged rooms of the underground garages... At that moment my telephone rang... It was Günsche. His voice hoarse with excitement he said, "I must have 200 litres of petrol immediately." At first I thought this was a bad joke and told him it was out of the question. Now he began shouting. "Petrol – Erich – petrol!" "OK, and why would you need a mere 200 litres of petrol?" "I cannot tell you on the phone."

In great haste I authorised my deputy to take some men at once and siphon out what petrol could be found and bring it to the place ordered. Then I hurried by the quickest route over rubble to Günsche, to find out what had happened.

*Rochus Misch:* [Hitler's servant, Heinz] Linge placed his ear to the door of the anteroom. He and Günsche opened the first door to the anteroom. They advanced slowly to Hitler's study door. Nobody drew breath. The second door was opened. I took a few steps forward and craned my neck.

My glance fell first on Eva. She was seated with her legs drawn up, her head inclined towards Hitler. Her shoes were under the sofa. Near her – I cannot remember whether on the sofa or the armchair near it – the dead Hitler. His eyes were open and staring, his head had fallen forward slightly.

*Erich Kempka:* There were twenty steps up to the bunker exit. I had not reckoned with the weight and my strength failed... Halfway up Günsche hurried to assist me, and together we carried the body of Eva Hitler into the open... Günsche and I lay Eva Hitler beside her husband... Russian shells were

*Hitler was last seen in public when he decorated members of the Hitler Youth in April 1945.*



*Secretary Traudl Humps married Hans Hermann Junge in 1943. He died in action the following year.*

exploding around us – it seemed that their artillery had suddenly doubled its bombardment.

I rushed back to the shelter of the bunker, stopping for a moment, panting... Then I seized a canister of petrol, ran out again and placed it near the two bodies... I took off the cap of the petrol can. Shells exploded close by, spattering us with earth and dust... Again we ran to the bunker entrance for cover, our nerves stretched to breaking point. Tensely we waited for the shelling in our area to die down before pouring petrol over the corpses. Then I ran out speedily and grabbed the canister. I was trembling as I poured the contents over the two bodies, and repeatedly told myself that I could not do it, but I was conscious of it being Hitler's last order.

How should we light the petrol? I protested at a suggestion to ignite the bodies using a hand grenade. My glance fell on a large piece of rag... It took only a second to open the petrol ►



*Lawlessness reigned in Berlin in April 1945, and its inhabitants feared the Russian soldiers.*





A US soldier in the Führerbunker. During the final days of the war, it was looted for valuables and vandalised by Soviet soldiers. After the war, the Russians blew up all the buildings to destroy potential Nazi memorials, and no trace of the complex remains above ground.

tin and soak the rag with the contents. “A match!” Dr Goebbels took a box of matches from his pocket and handed it to me. I set light to the rag and once it was afire lobbed it towards the petrol-soaked corpses... A bright flame flared up... Slowly the fire began to nibble at the corpses.

*Traudl Junge:* The door to Hitler’s room is still open... Eva’s little revolver is lying on the table with a pink chiffon scarf beside it, and I see the brass case of the poison capsule glinting on the floor next to Frau Hitler’s chair... Suddenly I feel something like hatred and helpless anger rise in me. I’m angry with the dead Führer.

*Rochus Misch:* What now? Soon we had a consensus: negotiate with the Russians. We had to connect a line to their field telephones. Linesman Gretz appeared with a giant drum of cable, pointed to two plug points on the junction box and said... “Now I’ll go over to the Russians”. The Red Army was already in Zimmer-Strasse, not four hundred metres away... I plugged in the cable [and] heard a Russian voice on the other end. “Moment, moment”, I said and connected the call to General Krebs, who was fluent in Russian.

## TUESDAY, 1ST MAY

**Soldiers from the Red Army celebrate the capture of the Reichstag. In the Führerbunker the survivors plan their escape.**

*Rochus Misch:* Towards five in the afternoon Frau Goebbels appeared at the telephone switchboard with all six children from the ante-bunker below... Magda Goebbels then began changing one after the other into the same type of long white

nightdress... She combed their hair and caressed the children gently. The nine-year-old Helga was crying. Frau Goebbels spoke softly and seriously with the children but was very tender with them... I knew this was the final parting of a mother’s from her children.

*Traudl Junge:* We sit around and wait for evening... Goebbels walks restlessly up and down, smoking, like a hotel proprietor waiting discreetly and in silence for the last guests to leave the bar. He has stopped complaining and ranting. So the time has come. We all shake hands with him in farewell. He wishes me good luck, with a twisted smile. “You may get through,” he says softly, in heartfelt tones. But I shake my head doubtfully... One by one, we leave these scenes of horror. I pass Hitler’s door for the last time.

## “I dreamed of being his chauffeur and constant companion”

Erich Kempka, Hitler’s chauffeur

## WEDNESDAY, 2ND MAY, 1945

**Joseph and Magda Goebbels have taken the lives of their children and committed suicide. Berlin surrenders.**

*Rochus Misch:* Long after midnight Goebbels gave me a sudden look as if he were seeing me for the first time... “The war is lost – ‘les jeux sont faits’”. We knew how to live, and now we have to know how to die. I do not need you any longer, Misch. Clear up here.”

Then he gave me his hand, something he had never done before. His handshake was firm; his fingers cold... For a moment I felt relief. I thought no more of Goebbels or Hitler. I went back to the switchboard and plucked out all the plugs... I was finally finished here. Now to get out.



# Rumour: Hitler survived

No photos exist of Hitler's corpse, so rumours have spread about the Führer's fate since the fall of the Third Reich in 1945. Some argue that Hitler's body was preserved by former Nazis – or even that the dictator didn't die in Berlin but staged a last-minute escape.

## MYTH

### Hitler did not die

**Hitler supposedly escaped Berlin** in a plane with Eva Braun and flew to Barcelona before going on to Argentina.

The myth was fuelled by none other than Stalin, who – when asked by President Truman – said that he believed Hitler had escaped to Spain. Stalin was never convinced of Hitler's death and had the Nazi leader's bodyguard, Rochus Misch, tortured to try to get to the 'truth'.

■ **Fact:** Hitler committed suicide in the Führerbunker along with Eva Braun and was burned shortly after in the Reich Chancellery's garden. This has been confirmed by numerous testimonies from people who were present.

Eva Braun

*Eva Braun chose to die alongside her new husband, Adolf Hitler.*



*According to myth, the corpses from the Reich Chancellery were not Hitler and Eva Braun.*

## MYTH

### Corpse still exists

**Adolf Hitler's body was never burned.** Instead, his dead body was recovered by faithful Nazi supporters and buried in a secret location.

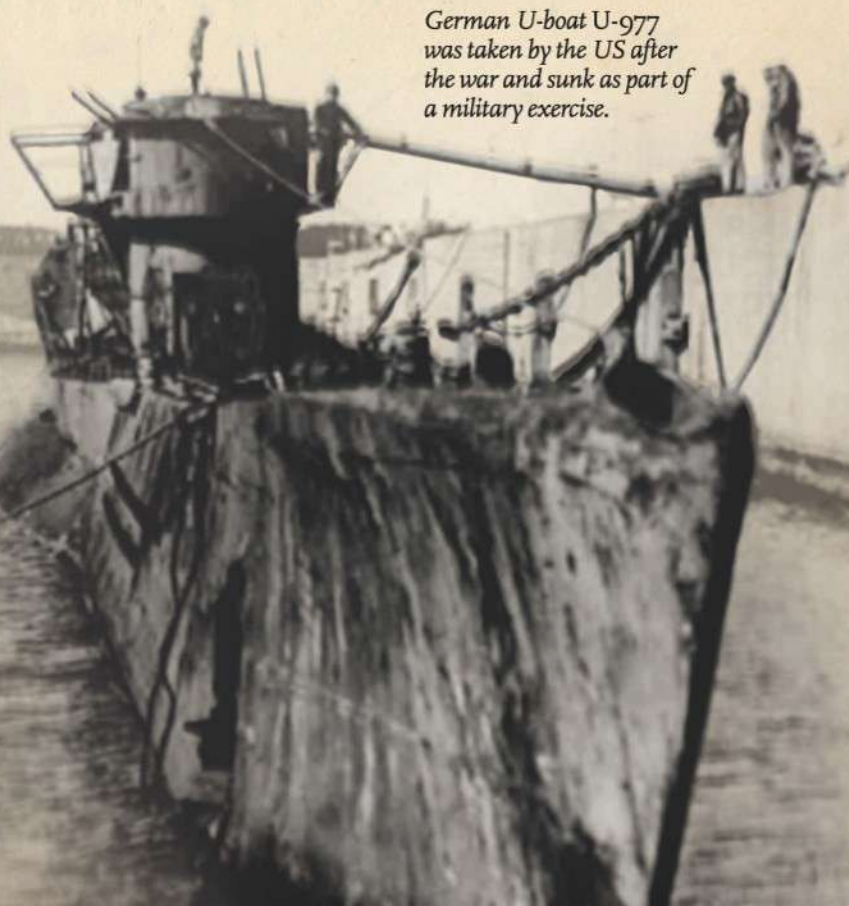
■ **Fact:** after the fall of Berlin, Soviet soldiers found the burned remains of two bodies in the Reich Chancellery that may have been Hitler and Eva Braun. The bones were buried in a Soviet army barracks at Magdeburg. In 1970, KGB chief Yuri Andropov decided to dig up the remains, cremated them again and scattered the ashes at an undisclosed location to avoid creating a shrine for neo-Nazis.

## MYTH

### Führer's remains were stored in the Antarctic

**According to a rumour connected to an expedition in 1939**, the Nazis created a secret base in Antarctica. After the war, German sub U-977 sailed to Argentina, where the crew surrendered. U-977 was reported to have been deployed to the Antarctic base to deliver Adolf Hitler's remains so a cloning project could be carried out later.

■ **Fact:** the expedition in 1939 was scientific and a location was chosen to set up a German whaling station. No trace has ever been found of a German military base in Antarctica. U-977 did sail to Argentina but sailed direct from Norway and had no opportunity to take onboard Hitler's ashes or any other Nazi relics.



*German U-boat U-977 was taken by the US after the war and sunk as part of a military exercise.*



# HITLER - THE RISE AND FALL

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# BELOVED DICTATOR WITH ICE-COLD CHARM

Hitler's spellbinding speeches and plan to build a mighty German empire seduced millions of people to back his party and his cause. But how was he able to inspire such adoration and blind faith? This issue examines Hitler as a person: his life and death, daily habits, companions and comforts. We look at the places he called home, from Berghof, his luxurious mansion in the Alps, to the cramped bunker under Berlin's streets where he took his own life. Those who knew the Führer personally often described him as charismatic, and many people worshipped him as a god. But how was Nazi propaganda able to portray a mass murderer as a new Messiah? And can the rise of history's populist leaders teach us useful lessons today?

